

Seminary Hill Association, Inc.  
2115 Marlboro Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22304-1013

November 9, 2017

Mr. Mark Jinks,  
City Manager, City of Alexandria

SHA commends the City for undertaking this initial study of traffic origin and destination, volumes, and routing patterns within Central Alexandria. The use of multiple complimentary data collection methodologies, license plate readers, traffic counters and Bluetooth stations provide a comprehensive picture of traffic movements, speeds, and increasing congestion. The Study will provide a sound basis for mitigation strategies and essential input to update the City's Transportation Master Plan in 2019. This letter provides Seminary Hill Association, Inc. (SHA) comments on the data collected and analyzed to date, including guiding principles that SHA recommends be used in exploring mitigation strategies and recommendations for further analysis.

One of the major benefits of this study is the confirmation of residents' anecdotal observations that local traffic congestion is exacerbated by regional cut-through traffic. The data indicated, for example, that approximately 25 percent of the vehicles entering N. Quaker Lane via Duke Street in the morning bore Maryland plates. A significant percentage of traffic enters and exits our areas via Telegraph Road, likely residents of either Maryland or south Fairfax County. For most afternoons, eastbound traffic on Duke Street approaching Telegraph Road is at a virtual standstill backing up traffic through neighborhood streets as Waze and Google suggest routing options that utilize some of our most residential roads.

At the Annual SHA meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>, SHA residents voted in favor of the following guiding principles in selecting appropriate mitigation strategies:

- Local traffic congestion is significantly exacerbated, if not primarily caused by, regional cut-through traffic, and hence the City of Alexandria should pursue regional solutions with neighboring jurisdictions to provide applicable transit options and encourage commuters to use non-Single Occupancy Vehicle options or remain on expressways.
- Refrain from moving one street's problem to a neighboring roadway
- Safety of our community is important.
- Balance the needs of residents in all neighborhoods affected by the proposal.

## Further Analysis

The value of the data collected will be greatly enhanced by further analysis. SHA's Task Force members have provided specific recommendations in that regard, as described in an attachment to this letter.

## Next steps

Traffic safety and congestion are concerns to all. The City should continue its concerted efforts to ensure that follow-on information is available broadly to all residents of the study area, and elicit feedback from a wide array of affected parties, not limiting input to Task Force members. For mitigation strategies to be successful, buy in is needed from affected citizens.

The information collected in this study points to the critical need for the City to not only address physical mitigation remedies, but more importantly to engage in dialogue with our regional neighbors, particularly those in Prince George's County, Maryland and Fairfax to identify strategies to reduce at least some of this cut-through traffic from our residential roadways. Updating Alexandria's Transportation Master Plan will provide an important forum to work with regional decision makers in identifying solutions that could entail parking facilities in Prince George's County aligned with commuter buses across the Wilson Bridge, accessing Metro rail in Alexandria.

Thank you for undertaking this study. The SHA looks forward to working with you to consider, analyze and test various congestion mitigation strategies.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy R. Jennings".

Nancy R. Jennings  
President, SHA

CC: Mayor Silberberg, Vice Mayor Wilson and members of City Council  
Traffic & Parking Board  
Transportation Commission

## **Attachment 1 – Further Analysis Recommended**

It would be useful to enhance the data in this study by comparing traffic counts and speeds to previously collected data, where available, for roads within the study area.

With respect to the Bluetooth, additional data on the number of vehicles using Bluetooth entering the Telegraph gateway and exiting through Station 1 at Seminary Road and 395, Station 2 at King Street and 395, and Station 3 at Quaker Lane approaching 395, compared to total vehicle counts from traffic counting tubes would be illustrative. Similar analysis of PM Bluetooth vehicles, compared to traffic counts, entering Stations 1, 2, and 3 and exiting through Telegraph would be interesting and provide a basis for determining if the Bluetooth technology provides a sufficiently representative sample for future use in other applications.

The study could be enhanced by including more detail on east-west streets such as Seminary Road and Janneys Lane, which the study indicates handle 40% to 50% of cut-through traffic and where residents report continuing high traffic volumes and ongoing speeding safety concerns.

From the perspective of understanding why vehicles are using these streets, it would be helpful to delineate the total number of Bluetooth equipped vehicles that entered the gateway, but did not depart via one of the gateways. It would be interesting to see if we could ascertain if these movements can be assigned to locations that have high employment concentrations, such as Alexandria Inova Hospital, or schools, such as Bishop Ireton and St. Stephens and St. Agnes, that draw students and vehicles from outside the study area.

Traffic speeds, depicted as 85th percentile speeds, are questionable in that their validity is dependent upon tube counting location and free flow conditions of traffic. While it is interesting that motorists can reach speeds exceeding speed limits on some short segments of roads in the study area, a more useful indicator of congestion would be the overall trip time for traffic to enter and exit the study area. A careful examination of the Bluetooth data might reveal such traffic time/speed data.

In the interest of future studies of traffic movements, origins and destinations, it would be helpful to know the relative costs of the 3 techniques for collecting data so that we might target particular concerns with more in-depth study. For example, it may be beneficial to utilize license plate readers on Fort Williams Parkway, near schools, or near Alexandria Hospital to assess to origin of vehicles accessing these locations. If cost effective, further study of trip time using Bluetooth technology may generate useful data.