

May 17, 2024

Dear Traffic & Parking Board Members,

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) strongly supports option 2 and urges the Board to adopt it instead of option 1. BPAC is an Alexandria nonprofit dedicated to promoting walking and bicycling throughout the city.

The Duke St In Motion and INOVA Hospital projects will bring a four mile long bikeway and walkway, connecting our city from east to west. We are delighted that city staff have proposed to convert Cambridge Rd to one-way, facilitating a new two-way bikeway. However, leaving a two block gap between West Taylor Run Pkwy and Hilton St will severely reduce the number of potential riders as about 60% of potential riders are interested in bicycling but concerned about safety. Duke St is the only funded plan to construct an all ages and abilities bicycling and walking route that connects the West End with Old Town.

Option 1 is not safe for children and adults of all ages and abilities to use. While these two blocks are relatively quiet today, staff propose to reroute a high volume slip lane onto this service road. Riding eastbound on these two blocks, people cycling will have to “share the road” with drivers exiting Duke St at a high speed as they will come downhill and not have to stop until the West Taylor Run Pkwy traffic light. Staff stated that 100-200 cars per hour will make that turn. Going eastbound towards Old Town, people cycling will have to thread their way between that oncoming traffic, approximately one driver for every 18-36 seconds during peak hours.

Option 2 proposes to separate people walking and bicycling from all of that traffic by creating a two-way bikeway. People cycling will have a protected space and avoid all traffic turning off of Duke St. Children and adults of all ages and abilities will be able to use the facility. For people walking along the narrow sidewalk, the bikeway will provide a safe buffer to traffic.

Eight years ago this month, Ryan Brown was struck by a driver at the West Taylor Run Pkwy intersection while walking his bike across the street. He was permanently disabled as a result of the crash. Option 2 will help prevent future tragedies.

Since Option 2 makes the Duke St service road one-way between West Taylor Run Pkwy and Hilton St, a small number of eastbound drivers will have to drive up to Janneys Ln and come back down, just 13 drivers during the peak hour. Since Option 2 is part of a four mile long bikeway, it is highly likely that more people will bike than drive on this section. Staff states that five people per peak hour already bike on this section of the street despite zero bicycle infrastructure. With the substantial increase in bus service, many more people will walk to and from the bus today. Option 2 recognizes Duke St as a project serving a large portion of the city, providing a safe, connected four mile long facility. Option 1 prioritizes convenience for a small number of drivers in one neighborhood over the safety of many more walkers and cyclists from all across the city.

The city has long planned for Duke St to have a continuous bicycle facility, going all the way back to the 1974 Master Bikeway Plan. Conspicuously missing from the staff report is any reference to the Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan approved by the City Council in 2016 and reaffirmed in 2021. It proposes an enhanced bicycle corridor on Duke St, ranking it as the 4th highest priority project out of 96. Alexandria was also the first city in Virginia to adopt Vision Zero to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries to zero. The City Council adopted Energy and Climate Change Action Plan also calls for a 58% reduction of emissions by 2030 and 90% by 2050, noting that modal shift is necessary to increase bicycle and pedestrian trips and that a reduction in driving will help the city reach those goals. Option 1 increases driving and will inhibit any modal shift from driving to walking and bicycling. It is completely inconsistent with those Council-adopted policies whereas option 2 fulfills them, in line with years of public input, outreach and City Council votes.

Please support option 2, prioritizing safety for everyone over convenience for a few drivers.

Sincerely,

Ken Notis

Chair,
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee