

BPAC Questionnaire Response from Roberto Gomez

1. Please describe your walking and biking experience in Alexandria.

I walk and bike regularly throughout Alexandria, though nowadays I spend more time in my truck moving between job sites and our Cornerstone Craftsman facility. That said, I've spent plenty of time on foot in neighborhoods across the city, from Del Ray to Arlandria to West End. I see firsthand how inconsistent our infrastructure is. Some areas have excellent sidewalks and clear crossings, while others force pedestrians into dangerous situations or make biking feel like taking your life into your hands. I've walked with students from our program who don't have cars and seen how hard it is to get around safely. Those experiences have shaped my understanding of why connected, safe pedestrian and bike infrastructure is essential for supporting the quality of life of Alexandrians.

2. Do you feel safe when walking around Alexandria?

It depends entirely on where you are. Old Town and parts of Del Ray feel quite safe for pedestrians. But there are certain pockets of Alexandria, such as Duke Street, Seminary Road, and parts of Route 1, where you're taking real risks as a pedestrian or cyclist. High-speed traffic, inadequate crossings, missing sidewalks in some areas, and drivers who aren't looking out for people outside of cars create dangerous conditions. I've had too many close calls myself, and I've heard worse stories from residents and students. The inconsistency in our transportation infrastructure is a pressing issue for me, as safety shouldn't depend on which neighborhood you can afford to live in.

a. What three measures do you think should be taken to improve pedestrian / bike safety?

First, we need to complete the gaps in our pedestrian and bike network. Right now, safe routes just end abruptly, forcing people into unsafe situations or preventing them from using active transportation at all. Filling these gaps should be a top infrastructure priority.

Second, we need to increase our traffic-calming measures on high-speed corridors where pedestrians and cyclists are most vulnerable. That means redesigning intersections, adding protected crossings, narrowing lanes where appropriate, and slowing vehicle speeds through design rather than just posting signs that the many residents will likely ignore anyways.

Third, we need real enforcement of existing traffic laws that protect our pedestrians. This includes enforcing laws against speeding, failing to yield at crosswalks, and aggressive driving. Technology like speed cameras in appropriate locations can help, but we also need cultural change so that drivers understand they share the road with people outside of cars who have an equal right to get around safely.

3. If speed cameras with automated ticketing are allowed, do you support speed cameras on streets such as, Duke St., Seminary Rd., etc. (beyond school zones)?

I'm open to it, depending on how it's implemented. Right now, Virginia law limits speed cameras to school zones and work zones, and Alexandria has been using that authority effectively. These cameras can drastically reduce the dangers of our roads, and they free up police to focus on other public safety needs. If the state expands authorization to allow speed cameras on high-crash corridors beyond school zones, I'd want to see a data-driven approach that targets the most dangerous stretches where speeding is a documented problem. Duke Street, Seminary Road, and similar high-speed arterials are exactly the kinds of places where automated enforcement could save lives. But this initiative needs to be about safety, not revenue generation, and the community needs to be involved in decisions about where cameras go. I'd support exploring expanded speed camera use if it's focused on protecting people and backed by crash data showing where the need is greatest.

4. If you are elected, how will you champion investments in walking and biking infrastructure in Alexandria to improve safety and encourage active transportation?

I'll advocate for these investments as core infrastructure priorities, not optional amenities. When budgets are tight, walking and biking infrastructure should be treated as essential as roads and sewers. I'll push for completing the networks identified in our mobility plans, filling gaps that currently force people into dangerous situations or prevent them from using active transportation at all. When we approve new development, those projects should be making our pedestrian and bike networks better, not worse. I'll also support funding applications for state and federal grants that can leverage city dollars to build more infrastructure faster. And critically, I'll make sure the people who actually walk and bike in Alexandria have a real voice in these decisions. The folks who depend on walking and biking for transportation know where the problems are, and we need to listen to them.

5. How much do you see the lack of a complete connected bike network as a barrier to more biking? How can we better connect the network?

It's a huge barrier. Most people aren't going to bike if they have to navigate high-speed traffic on dangerous roads to complete their trip. Pedestrians should be safe for the whole trip, not just part of it. Right now, we have some excellent trail segments and some good protected bike lanes, but they don't connect to each other in a way that creates a usable citywide network. That forces even confident cyclists onto dangerous streets, and it makes biking a non-option at the moment for many families with kids, older adults, or anyone who's not comfortable navigating high-speed traffic. We can better connect the network by prioritizing the gaps that break up otherwise safe routes. When you've got a mile of safe bike infrastructure that dead-ends into a quarter-mile gap with no safe option, fixing that gap should be the priority. We also need to think about connections to major destinations such as metro stations, schools, employment centers, and commercial districts. If people can't bike safely to the places they actually need to go, the network isn't serving its purpose. However, nothing is perfect. We must be prepared to make compromises. Sometimes that means repurposing a travel lane or removing some parking to create protected bike infrastructure. Those decisions aren't always popular, but if we're serious about creating transportation options beyond cars, we have to make the space for them.

6. The City is planning a Complete Streets project on Braddock Rd which requires trade offs between parking and capacity for drivers and safety for people walking and biking. If approved by the Traffic & Parking Board, there is a significant likelihood it will be appealed to the City Council. What are your views on this project?

I support moving forward with safety improvements on Braddock Road. VDOT has designated that corridor as a top statewide priority for pedestrian and bicycle safety upgrades, and there's been extensive community input showing real safety concerns. For years, parents have worried about kids walking to George Washington Middle School, residents have reported dangerous conditions, and crash data has backed up those concerns. When state transportation officials identify a corridor as a top safety priority and the community is telling us there's a problem, we need to act. I'd want to make sure any final plan has genuinely engaged with those concerns and looked for ways to minimize negative impacts while still achieving our core safety goals.