



April 30, 2024

The City of Alexandria
Attn: City Council Members
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

CC: T&ES, Adriana Castañeda, Hillary Orr

Re: Alexandria Daylighting & Intersection Setbacks Ordinance & Policy

Dear Mayor Wilson and City Councilors,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and our more than 5,000 members across the City of Alexandria and the Washington metropolitan area to express our concern about the lack of adequate visibility (known as daylighting) at intersections in Alexandria and as echoed by the Alexandria Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

The current lack of daylighting at intersections in Alexandria poses significant risks to vulnerable roadway users such as pedestrians, cyclists, other micro-mobility users, and people waiting for transit. Alexandria's daylighting ordinance (Sec. 10-4-41) is outdated, vague, inconsistently enforced, and lacks equity. We urge Alexandria to adopt a 30-foot daylighting setback at all intersections and a 20-foot setback from stop signs, crosswalks, and entrances to multi-vehicle parking lots as implemented in similarly-populated Arlington and Fairfax counties and as recommended in the recently-updated Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Many of the intersections most impacted by insufficient daylighting or visibility are on residential streets and may appear innocuous. Because of the lower volumes of traffic, these intersections don't often qualify as high crash corridors for action under our current Vision Zero plan, but the lack of visibility nonetheless has a substantial negative impact on safety. Parked cars can also block visibility at lot entrances, requiring drivers to edge into bicyclist and pedestrian spaces and creating additional crash risks.

We cannot achieve our Vision Zero or our modal shift goals – encouraging more people to opt for transit, bicycling, or walking rather than driving alone – without addressing these visibility

concerns. When the first intersections or sidewalks residents encounter upon leaving their homes are not consistently safe, it contributes to a culture of fear of navigating our City on foot or by bike. Our infrastructure sends a nonverbal cue to all Alexandrians that safety is not a priority before they even reach the arterial roads.

Data overwhelmingly supports the effectiveness of instituting 30-foot setbacks to reduce pedestrian crashes and near-misses. Hoboken, New Jersey began more rigorously enforcing its existing restriction on parking within 25 feet of an intersection and making low-cost visibility upgrades during repaving such as adding 'no parking' signs, painted curbs, bollards, and scooter/bike parking corrals. They also made it easier for residents to request daylighting in their neighborhoods. Measures like these have helped Hoboken achieve a 7th consecutive year without a pedestrian fatality to go along with an 18% reduction in injury crashes and a 62% reduction in serious injuries.

We urge you to direct the City Attorney to look into the requirements for updating the ordinance and to make any necessary updates immediately. Following that, T&ES should embark on a process to develop implementation recommendations within the next 3 years to include consistent guidelines for daylighting, a plan for quick-build daylighting treatment installation, and a process by which residents can make daylighting requests. Together, these short-term and long-term actions will help ensure our streets are safer to navigate for all residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to the community.

Sincerely,
Kevin O'Brien, Virginia Organizer
Washington Area Bicyclist Association