



3 February 2023

The City of Alexandria
301 King Street, Suite 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314

Attn: Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson and City Council Members
Cc: T&ES

On behalf of the Alexandria Families for Safe Streets (AFSS) Board of Directors, I would like to express our full support for the proposal to implement No Turn on Red (NTOR) rules at numerous intersections along the Route 1 corridor.¹ Implementing NTOR policies will make these streets safer for all road users, improve the walkability of key mixed use areas of Old Town, and help bring Alexandria on par with recent policies from other cities leading the way in street safety. We strongly urge the City to commit fully to NTOR by avoiding pitfalls from limiting the policy to certain times of day or only when pedestrians are present. We advocate that the City eventually expand NTOR as a blanket policy, citywide.

Right turn on red is dangerous for everyone in and around the roadway. Indeed, Alexandria's own Vision Zero Action Plan has identified the need for NTOR changes, and AFSS's Near Miss Survey² continuously adds to the evidence that right turn on red is particularly dangerous for vulnerable road users. This has been known for some time and confirmed repeatedly; historic data from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has shown that allowing right turn on red increases the number of vehicle-on-vehicle, vehicle-on-pedestrian, and vehicle-on-bicycle collisions significantly.³ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has likewise found that pedestrians and cyclists account for more than half of all fatalities caused by allowing right on red⁴ – putting an unfair burden on the safety of those vulnerable road users seeking healthier, more sustainable means of transportation. Anecdotally, we already know these things to be true; walking and biking in Old Town can be stressful for vulnerable road users who are

¹ We understand that the City is considering adopting NTOR rules at the intersections of Henry Street and Wythe, Ormonoco, Princess, and Queen Streets, as well as the intersections of Patrick Street and Montgomery, Wythe, Pendleton, Oronoco, Princess, and Cameron Streets. We support the implementation of NTOR at all of these locations, as well as any other intersections the City may consider now or in the future.

² See real-time results of the Near Miss Survey on our [Near Miss Dashboard](#).

³ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety; *Right-turn-on-red laws and motor vehicle crashes: a review of the literature*; <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/714>

⁴ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; *The Safety Impact of Right Turn on Red Report To Congress*; <https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/outreach/traftech/1995/tt086.htm>

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forced to dodge cars trying to turn right on red onto one of the busiest stretches of roadway in our community, Route 1.

Meanwhile, other cities leading the charge on road safety have implemented similar NTOR policies and found significant results. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency found that banning right on red at 50 intersections decreased ‘close call’ incidents (in which a pedestrian is nearly struck by a vehicle) by 80% and decreased crosswalk obstruction by 70%.⁵ Meanwhile, our neighbors in Washington, DC implemented a similar NTOR policy at 100 locations around the District and found that these changes all-but eliminated vehicle-on-vehicle collisions and instances of drivers failing to yield to pedestrians.⁶ The policies were so successful, in fact, that DC recently voted to ban right on red across the District starting in 2025.

Things are no different here in Alexandria: we face the same challenges that other cities have faced and stand to gain the same benefits they gained by banning right turn on red. Wouldn’t we choose to decrease all vehicular collisions, especially those maiming and killing vulnerable road users, if we had the choice? Couldn’t we join the ranks of other great walkable cities by adopting policies like NTOR that prioritize safety and equitable, sustainable transportation? We would, and we can, so we should.

That said, there are a number of pitfalls the City will need to avoid to fully enjoy the benefits of NTOR at these (and hopefully other) intersections. Enforcement will need to be emphasized to ensure that drivers are not allowed to flout the law and put vulnerable road users at risk. Red light cameras could be used to equitably enforce these restrictions, in light of Alexandria Police Department’s shortfall of staff and inability to prioritize traffic enforcement.

Other best practices could make this NTOR adoption a real winner. Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) will be key for ensuring that pedestrians crossing with the signal are visible to drivers waiting to turn right once the light changes. We encourage the City to audit existing LPIs to ensure they meet best practices and consider adding LPIs at any locations where they do not currently exist – particularly at the locations where NTOR is implemented. Finally, we strongly encourage the City to consider implementing NTOR citywide, as the benefits of the policy are needed at every intersection, in every neighborhood of our community. Further, comprehensively banning right turn on red would be much easier to communicate to the public and would help ensure that drivers understand that NTOR is the law anywhere and everywhere in our city.

⁵ San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency; *Tenderloin No Turn on Red Evaluation*;

https://www.sfmta.com/sites/default/files/reports-and-documents/2022/04/tenderloinntor_factsheet_0.pdf

⁶ Joshua Wolfram, Robin Fish, Wasim Raja, and Rahul Jain; *Analysis of Expanded No Turn on Red Applications in Washington, DC, USA*;

<https://ite.ygsclibook.com/pubs/itejournal/2022/may-2022/live/index.html#p=41>



Right turn on red is bad for drivers, it is bad for pedestrians, and it is bad for cyclists. It is time to acknowledge that this policy is a bad one, full stop. AFSS fully supports the City of Alexandria in this proposal to introduce NTOR at 10 intersections along the Route 1 corridor. We also emphasize the importance of fully supporting such NTOR policies by avoiding exceptions that defeat the purpose and weak enforcement that allows drivers to break the law with impunity. We strongly suggest that Alexandria pursue additional best practices to make NTOR implementation successful, and we emphatically encourage the City to expand NTOR as a blanket policy citywide.

Respectfully,

Patrick Wise
Board Member
Alexandria Families for Safe Streets

cc: Mike Doyle