Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

Zoom Meeting  21 March 2023: 6:30 pm to 8 pm

Advisory Committee Notes
Introductions – 13 participants

Treasurer’s report – Norm Lisy reported that we have $22,317.32 in the bank. Miscellaneous expenses like FB, Esri annual fee, MailChimp, etc. but rarely do such expenses exceed $100 on their own. AFSS does not pay rent for its office across from the King Metro Station, nor do we have any wages or salaries and no employees because we operate as an all-volunteer organization. Lately, we have started to use independent contractors to help with our marketing and some other admin types of functions, but these expenditures are modest. Virtually all of our funds go directly toward things that benefit people on the ground in terms of mobilizing and encouraging people to be on safe streets in the Alexandria area.

Mike: You're absolutely right, Norm. And most of that money will quickly drain out because of our big push in the fall on buying different marketing swag, as they call it (a lot of blinkers, the Near Miss QR code cards and flyers and a lot of social media marketing material). We need to up our game on social media. So, I've been talking to a few professional social media groups. Hopefully, they will help us in our market penetration, particularly in the underserved communities. One person I talked to recently had some really good ideas. They're not going to be cheap, but I think they can help us in our mission of reaching communities that are underserved and typically located near highly dangerous 4 to 6 lane road corridors throughout Northern Virginia. We can do a better job of educating these community members about basic pedestrian safety practices as well as explain what the Near Miss app can do for them as a crowd sourcing means of communicating danger on their streets.

Guest Speakers:
1. Sgt. Richard Magnum, Alexandria Police Department. Rich was just transferred to the Traffic Safety Section a few weeks ago and he provided AFSS members with the following report regarding pedestrian crashes YTD in Alexandria.
   - Friday Jan 20, 2023, there was a crash involving a pedestrian at Duke Street and South Payton Street. A vehicle was making a left turn onto Duke Street and failed to see the pedestrian in the crosswalk. Time was
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

10:28 a.m. **Another** left turn. How is the pedestrian? Yes, they are OK. Good. Did that driver get a citation? That driver was cited for failure to pay full-time attention.

- **On 22nd of January**, which was a Sunday, at 6:45 p.m., we had another crash involving a pedestrian at Prince Street and South & Lee Street. The vehicle was making a left turn onto South Lee Street from Prince and struck a pedestrian. The driver fled the scene but was later identified. The driver denied striking the victim with his vehicle. And, unfortunately, I don’t have any information as to whether the citation was issued or not on this particular crash. Mike: If the pedestrian was in the crosswalk, and I know that intersection well, that’s a failure to yield and the driver fleeing the scene of a crash. That’s citation.

- SGT MAGNUM: Correct. And again, I'm sorry I don't have more for you on this. I can follow up on this. And I believe your meetings are monthly? I can give you a more detailed report next month. I'll pull the report and find out exactly what happened in this case. Mike: Great, thank you.

- **The 3rd crash**, which occurred on February 1st, a Wednesday at 9:27 a.m. at Mount Vernon Avenue and Monroe Street. A vehicle was making a left turn on to East Monroe and, again, struck a pedestrian. The driver was cited for failure to stop for a pedestrian. Question, how is the lady? In this case, the pedestrian was crossing the intersection with the signal, with the green light. The (driver of) the vehicle made a left-hand turn onto East Monroe, struck the pedestrian. The pedestrian was hit by the vehicle's passenger side bumper and the victim was transported to the hospital with life-threatening injuries at the time. Fortunately, she was treated, upgraded, and released. Question: What type of vehicle was that? SGT MAGNUM: I don't have the exact vehicle here. I can find that out as well and report on it next month. SPEAKER: Yeah, it's always interesting what type of vehicle. Many SUVs are big and can be more deadly to pedestrians and cyclists.

- **The 4th pedestrian crash occurred on March 16th** at 5:00 pm on North Fayette at First Street. My report says that the vehicle came to a full stop and then proceeded to drive westbound onto First Street and struck the pedestrian in the crosswalk. Is that the gentleman that spoke earlier in the introductions?
Stewart: That's me. I won the prize. The quick background was this guy was on North Fayette facing southbound. He did stop. I saw him out of the left side of my eye, no signal. There was a car on the other side on First facing west and a bicyclist in full gear on First facing east, and he became the chief witness. I was a third of the way out of the crosswalk and, you know, very clearly occupying the crosswalk. It turns out that that truck (a Dodge Ram 1500) did take a right turn and they were good enough to stop right. They were two guys from Ohio in town for some sort of contract discussions that they were in town for and maybe not familiar with the area, maybe confused. The hour of the time of day was obviously rush hour, which, you know, is where you have bikes, pedestrians, cars, the whole bit. I did look just now at Google maps at the intersection, and those turns are actually relatively loose. They're not like Fairfax corners, but they are not a tight 90-degree corner. Really made me think that corner ped bump-outs make a huge difference at these intersections because they shorten the crossing distance and give a better chance for the driver to see you. And again, it was a Dodge Ram truck, and I don't know what their blind spots are, but he clearly did not see me. I don't know if he was confused about where he was. I don't know if he was blinded by the design of the vehicle or talking to his buddy. All I know is that I was very lucky.

SGT MAGNUM: I have in my notes here that you did not want the driver to be issued a summons. Is that correct?

Stewart: Yes, that's what I said. Obviously, it was all disconcerting. Again, I don't think I had a concussion or anything. But on the other hand, I felt like in this case, it was not an aggressive error on this person's part. I could tell that they were horrified by it and will be -- or have been affected by it. He was very cooperative with the police. We got a full thorough report from you all, the insurance information. I've been to the ortho doctor. I just talked to the insurance company about the whole subrogation thing where they're going to go after his insurance company for the cost and I'll also seek to have some cash for any longer-term care if this becomes the sort of thing where I can tell when the bad weather is coming in because my foot hurts or something. But that's what I felt was appropriate at the time. If you guys advise otherwise, both from the advocacy side and from the police side, let me know.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

Mike: Well, I can say, first of all, I had the pleasure and the honor of knowing you for several years. You're basically a very nice person, among other attributes. And you're the typical male ego thing that I am tough and will be OK. That reaction is quite normal, and I can cite other examples of colleagues in Alexandria who've been crashed into, they get up and say at the time that they are OK. One example, egregious, was a gentleman (at the time he was 90), and a driver turning left knocked him down. The driver was a young lady, and she went hysterical. And he gets up, he says, “I’m okay”. And the police filed no charges because he is such a nice person. The next morning, at 3:00 am he had to go to the hospital and the fact that he said, “I’m okay”, has haunted him in any civil lawsuit follow-up. So, I strongly urge, not that you're looking for huge retribution, but to protect yourself, the modus operandum should be, yes press charges.

Now, the reality is, with Virginia’s traffic laws, failure to yield or not paying attention is a slap on the wrist in a criminal court of law. It's at best a $250 fine, but many times the driver gets no fine. They may have court costs. They do not face points or jail time. And even drivers who run over and kill people are getting nothing because of the weakness in our State laws, which is another issue that we're trying to get changed, but that's a different story and uphill battle because of the down-state legislators in Richmond. So, anyway, I strongly suggest if, God forbid, anybody on this call or any of our members experience being crashed into -- because the adrenaline is going, you're not thinking properly, and your instincts are “I can make it and I feel bad for this driver”. And the police do that, too. They are human and sometime empathize with a distraught driver. We've talked to the police about that and asked them to just automatically cite the driver.

Stewart: Well, two things. First, officer Magnum, is it possible to still change my mind since the full police record is in place?

SGT MAGNUM: I'll tell you, Stewart, I couldn't answer that question. I think that would be more a question for an attorney than for law enforcement.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

Stewart: Officer Magnum, know that I was asked at by two, if not three officers, here's their story. “We didn't see the accident, we weren't here, so we can't cite them. Do you want to press charges here?” At this point, they asked me that very clearly. So, it is true that I felt like, you know, you say there are no accidents, I guess, but I felt like it was indeed an accident, an error on this person's part. The person was obviously upset and that's why at the time, maybe my head was a little clouded, but I decided not to press charges.

Mike: Oh, it's normal. Don't beat yourself up. You have a very human reaction, and most people are that way.

Melissa, do you have a comment? Yes, I just wanted to build on that and say, like, it really seems to me that it's a weakness in the process that we expect a victim of a crash to be able to be sound enough of mind in the moment to make a decision like that. And it's the same with, you know, in the bicycle advocacy world, trying to coach bicyclists on what to do when they get hit and how to handle the situation. At least like in that universe, there are communities of bicyclists who are trying to learn what to do and to communicate it with one another so that they can make the best judgment in the moment. But, like, in reality, in the moment, whoever's crashed into is not, like, thinking clearly. You're probably just kind of doing the assessment of, like, am I okay? Am I okay? Am I okay? And like you said, Mike, it might be the instinct to say, okay, I think I'm okay. But really, no one should be asking you a serious judgment question at that time. It's almost like we need to talk to folks like the Commonwealth Attorney and ask what are the rules about this? Do we have to make decisions in the moment just like that or can the police be trained to follow up a couple of days later and ask the question then? Like something that put a little pause on it. Because right in that moment, what really matters is the life or death of the person and letting them come to grips with what just happened. And I just don't think it's reasonable, the set up. It's like you're bound to fail because you're not going to say the right thing in the moment.

Mike: Just a little vignette. When I was crashed into and I finally got home from the hospital and I was recovering, and I got notification that within 30
days there was going to be a court hearing against the driver. Do you want to show up and press charges? I felt like at that point, I was really having issues, and I thought, well, this could be my fault when in fact it wasn't my fault. Another issue was do I want to face the person who damn near killed me. I didn't want to go through it. My wife was totally stressed out as was I. There should be a role, to take your point, Melissa, for somebody who's more objective, because the emotions of a crash survivor are very extreme and you have all sorts of thoughts about life and what it was like to be crashed into, it keeps playing in one's head.

DR. PALETTA: Yes. You know, I'm speaking as a physician now. Imagine a concussion on a football field, asking the quarterback do you feel okay to play? I mean, it's crazy. And in medicine, once we give a sedative to somebody, they can't give consent anymore. And to me, somebody who's in an accident, they're in that clinical position. So, I don't think we're going to change whatever the laws are. But, you know, if there is a bicyclist witnessing it, and that's what the police are there for, to do a report, you don't ask the person who was hit do you want to press charges? That absolutely makes no sense.

SPEAKER: So, it sounded like a lot of the time when a citation is issued for someone striking a pedestrian, it's a failure to pay full-time attention. But that incident on Mount Vernon and Monroe Street, there was a different citation issued for that. Can you explain the difference between the two or why one or the other would be issued in a given case?

SGT MAGNUM: No, it's officer's discretion what to charge. I couldn't tell you because I wasn't there why one was charged with failure to pay full-time attention and the other one was driver failed to stop for a pedestrian, I believe. I'm not sure. I couldn't speak to it because I don't have the report in front of me. Again, I apologize. Had I known a little sooner, I would have probably pulled all the reports, and I could probably speak better to each of your questions, but right now, I'm not in a position to take a guess at what the reason was.

Mike: Okay, that's all right. So they both -- I mean, I'm not a lawyer so what the hell do I know? But the failure to yield or not to pay full-time attention
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

and failure to yield are both, I believe, misdemeanors, which means slap on wrist, maybe a $250 fine. So, I would encourage anybody that has the time, read our Fairfax Families for Safe Streets 2022 Crash Report on the NoVA FSS / Fairfax FSS web site. There were 32 pedestrian fatalities in Fairfax County in 2022 and only 10 drivers were cited for a traffic violation, and it just goes downhill from there for drivers who kill a pedestrian. One guy was reckless driving, but he got a 30-day suspended sentence and $250 fine. And many of the other drivers got nothing or are cases still pending. Maybe the driver had to pay a court fee of $68.40. I mean, it's egregious, it's way out of whack. There is no real penalty or deterrence and no consequences for killing someone.

Guest Speaker #2 - Bryan Hayes: a complete Streets planner for the City of Alexandria. I work on a number of projects under kind of the Complete Streets umbrella, all of which are related to making it easier and safer for people to move around the city by whichever means they choose, primarily pedestrians, biking, and other kind of human-powered modes, but also making our street safer for drivers and those interactions between everyone.

One of the things that we do under that Complete Streets umbrella is called Safe Routes to School. Safe Routes to School is a federal program whose purpose is to improve walking and biking conditions, so that students and their families can walk and bike to school more often instead of relying on buses or especially, you know, single automobile trips.

The City of Alexandria started its Safe Routes to School program in 2003. Kind of one of the big accomplishments of the program so far was in 2017, when the city conducted Walk Audits at the City's 13 elementary schools and two K-through-8 schools. The recommendations from those Walk Audits continue to guide implementation, a lot of the small projects that we do. We're working on a big project near William Ramsey & Sanger at present. We did a bunch of pedestrian improvements, kind of at the Rayburn area in Northwest Alexandria, better crosswalks, put marking to prevent cars from parking on the crosswalks. All of these steps are related to Safe Routes to School recommendations.

In 2023, the city will conduct Walk Audits at five ACPS campuses. So, there's Ferdinand T. Day, which is an elementary school up at Beauregard and Rayburn.
There's George Washington Middle School, Francis Hammond Middle School, and the two campuses of Alexandria City's High School.

Safe Routes to School kind of recommendations generally focus on infrastructure improvements. We certainly coordinate with Alexandria Police Department and Alexandria City Public Schools. T&ES’ goal is how can we change the infrastructure of the city to make it easier and safer? So, some of the really simple things that are not always cheap or easy to implement like crosswalks, curb extensions, signal timing and sidewalks. Crosswalks are a big thing. We have lots of crossings in the city that could be made safer by increasing the visibility, by including median refuges, so the pedestrian who move more slowly, people with young kids, with strollers, people who have large burdens that they're carrying, older people. So that's one of the ways that we're making our crossings safer.

We're putting rapid rectangular flash beacons, RRFBs in a lot of locations to draw more attention to crossings. Curb extensions are another way that we make crossings shorter by narrowing the street at intersections or where pedestrians want to cross, giving the pedestrians more space, taking a little space from the cars, meaning the crossings typically are shorter and safer.

Signal timing is a big thing. We do a lot of signal timing projects. It was about no turn on reds on Patrick and Henry Street, and part of the no turn on red is what we call leading pedestrian interval, where we give pedestrians a 3 to 7 second head start into the intersection before we allow automobiles to enter the intersection. Over by the Mount Vernon Community School, there's a Pedestrian Only crossing, so pedestrians can cross in any direction at once. That's a different phase pattern than we see at a lot of our intersections. But signal timing is one thing that we can do either at certain times of the day or throughout the day to give pedestrians a priority or a head start at our intersections.

Obviously, sidewalks are really important for getting around the city. Good, wide sidewalks are best. In an older city like Alexandria, not all of our sidewalks are flat or wide, and there's some historic constraints in some parts of the city. Other parts of the city are built without sidewalks. You know, I've been thinking of a project that my colleague Alex, whom I'm sure you all know, was working on to kind of extend a sidewalk that was missing when we heard from parents as part of a Safe Routes to School project, that they always have to cross the street to get to
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

school, but there's no natural crossing. It would be great if this sidewalk continued. We made a recommendation to extend the sidewalk to the neighborhood. There was some opposition, but ultimately the Traffic and Parking Board and then the City Council approved the installation of this sidewalk.

Mike: Bryan, AFSS spoke in favor of that measure.

Bryan: Thank you so much.

Mike: That's the type of advocacy that we can do.

Bryan: Walk Audits that we're conducting are kind of in a four-step process, though a lot of these are concurrent. So, we're working with a consultant group called Tool Design. We started data collection and mapping earlier, actually late last year. We collected data from ACPS. We've looked at kind of crash data, looked at data, looked at maps. This is the kind of quantitative element of this. This is the data-driven part.

The next part is really important, that's community engagement. That is the qualitative part where we can look at the data and the data can only tell you so much. So, then earlier this month, we opened a feedback forum to members of the -- residents of the city, really anyone can participate. We targeted our outreach primarily to people in the school community for each of those five schools, and we're asking for people to share their experiences, what works, what doesn't work. For example, this morning we were at George Washington Middle School, and some of the parents kind of gave us some specific areas that we needed to go look at, where they felt they as parents or their kids were particularly unsafe. The data might tell us the same locations, but it doesn't always capture everything. So, it's really important that we hear from members of the school community.

We are starting to conduct the Walk Audits again. We had one Walk Audit this morning at George Washington Middle School. Next week, we're conducting two Walk Audits, one at Ferdinand T. Day and then one at Francis Hammond. Later in April, we will be conducting Walk Audits at both Alexandria City High School campuses.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

One of the reasons that I'm here tonight is that I reached out to Mike to see if he or any of the members of your group wanted to participate in the Walk Audits. Unfortunately, we only have a small kind of number of people who can participate, so we're asking for one from your group. The Walk Audits are where city engineers, city planners, engineers, and the planners with Tool Design (the consulting group) come with a representative of the Parent Teacher Association, representatives from school leadership. Today we had three APD officers that participated, a bunch of people together. We divide into groups, and we observe students as they're either coming or leaving school. Most of our observations are in the morning, so we're watching where the buses are coming from. What types of interactions do the buses have with pedestrians, cyclists, cars? What does the parent drop-off look like? Is parent drop-off smooth and orderly? Is it chaotic? Today we were at a middle school. Middle schoolers are chaotic and unpredictable themselves. So, are they navigating space safely? Is there enough opportunity for them to be safe? Making observations like that.

There are schools on Mount Vernon, King Street or Braddock Road. There's a lot of major streets that are near these schools. We want to understand people who have to walk because they aren't provided buses by the city, do they have safe routes to school? Are those routes complete? Do they have sidewalks? Do they have crosswalks? Are the signal timings compatible with the student use? Really looking at lots of stuff.

We take these recommendation and should be done by the end of June. We'll use those to plan improvements for future fiscal years. These recommendations will be shared. We can share them with this group. We'll share them with the Traffic and Parking Board, Transportation Commission. You know, and in developing those recommendations we will work with our partners at APD, at ACPS.

Mike: So, just so you know, Bryan, you're new, those original Walk Audits of 2017, people got involved. They did all if what you described. I wasn't around, but other colleagues were, and they were very frustrated because it took forever to get some action on the recommendations. I applaud that T&ES in the past year and a half or two years, they're finally starting to take it up. So, we hope in our advocacy role that these new Walk Audit findings are implemented a heck of a lot sooner
than the previous 2017 batch were. There's lots of different reasons why nothing was done for so long but meanwhile, kids are walking / biking to school, and the bottom line is we got to keep them safe as we can. So, thank you Bryan and we're delighted that you're here and giving us the heads-up on the Walk Audits. We will get some volunteers.

Bryan: The Walk Audit, I would set aside kind of two hours. We did about 90 minutes today. I will say that there's other ways to get involved, and this is something that I wanted to share with you all. Again, it's this link here on the bottom. I can put it in the chat when we're done.

Contribute to the Walk Audits by completing the online feedback form!

Bryan: One of the benefits that we've seen from these Walk Audits is obviously the purpose of the Walk Audits is to develop recommendations to make it easier and safer for students and their families to get to and from school. The good news is, and the greater benefit for the city, is that other people, other than students and their families, use these streets, use these crosswalks, move through these neighborhoods. So, if you or any of your neighbors live near a school that's one of these schools, I really encourage you to take a moment to complete the survey. You don't have to be a parent. You don't have to have had a kid in the past or currently have a kid. We're always accepting feedback and stuff, but this is a really good opportunity to get a community's comments.

Mike: I'm going to come back to you on that feedback. Charles, you have your hand up.

Charles BAILEY: Yes, just a brief comment. As far as Mount Vernon Avenue, that street is just busy. I mean, you have people coming from the left and right. You have cars coming from the left and right and head on, and it's just awful. I've stopped driving on Mount Vernon Avenue. I go down Commonwealth, a whole lot less cluttered, but you probably realize that when you go through there. Wanted to comment on this fact.

Mike: You are right Charles, thank you. So, Bryan, being totally unobjective, another way to get the community feedback is to look at AFSS’s crowdsourcing
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets ("AFSS")

Near Miss data on our website. And it's an opportunity for people to be able to enter that data because that data tells the story of what people in our community are saying about dangers at intersections and other locations on our streets. In addition, our dashboard shows the TREDs crash history of where pedestrians have been seriously injured or killed. So, Mount Vernon, to your point Charles, is a crash area. Many people have been killed and seriously injured on Mount Vernon as well as a number of other corridors. Duke Street as an example, and we know Patrick and Henry.

But, Bryan, what we can do, and I would suggest, is consider bringing in Near Miss data and use that as part of observations. It's not “scientific” as TREDs, but neither are comments registered on the Walk Audit by the public at large. The Near Miss data is just anecdotal from people on the streets that can provide some insights.

Bryan: I'm really glad that you mentioned that Mike, because after our conversation earlier today, I sent a link to the Tool Design group, the consultants who are managing the compilation of all of this data. So, next time I meet with them, I will kind of reiterate the value of kind of using the Near Miss submissions, if anything, in the least, to identify areas where there are some problems.

Melissa McMahon: I would definitely use the PTAs and daycare centers to try to use the walk audit survey. I think that those are concerned audiences that might also be interested in providing input. And then lastly, I wanted to mention the Near Miss data because I think that's really important. The survey is, I don't know, it's pretty basic. And one thing that I think might be a missed opportunity here is using a mapping instrument as part of the survey. Because, like you mentioned, and I didn't really put two and two together until I saw your slides, that in terms of the order of activities that you have done in your project, you started with existing conditions and mapping activities that your consultant was doing. People could put workers on a map, flags on a map saying these are my problem locations, and then they could put some narrative around it. But when you're just filling in an empty box with your description of your experience, it's intimidating. And it's also like, how specific should I be or how much time do I have to provide that description? So, I just think that you might have gotten more useful targeted information if you used some sort of mapping element.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

Bryan: I really appreciate your comments on the kind of broad outreach. We started specifically with the school leadership and the PTAs for the specific schools. But since then, we've reached out to PTAC, which is the Association of all of the PTAs in the city. We've worked with ACPS to do a kind of broad messaging. So, we kind of did the first week local and then we worked to reach out to the other schools. And so that's been good to hear that's kind of catching on.

The second thing is -- so one of the things that's different between the 2023 Walk Audits and the 2017 Walk Audits is that we are doing community engagement at all. Last time, it was kind of just a technical exercise, and we recognized that, you know, these are going to have impacts on people. We want to hear from them. We did explore a mapping element, and the main reason that we chose not to do it this time is because we had the survey translated to three other languages: Amharic, Arabic, and Spanish. And we were basically running into problems where it would take too long to develop a tool that would allow mapping with those translations.

But mapping is really important to us. It's part of the Walk Audit process when we do our observation. And it's definitely something that we want to figure out a more technically elegant solution to implement in the future. Because the comments you made are absolutely right. Not everyone thinks in words, sentences, paragraphs. Some people are really visual and, in some ways, having visual maps is a way to overcome some of those language barriers. And so, we know that it's kind of a missed opportunity and it's something that we really want to work on to incorporate in future outreach. So, thank you, Melissa, for the comments.

Old Business
• Duke Street Mobility Project update
Dane LAURITZEN: The Project Committee is hoping to have the council vote by early July, July 5th. So, currently, what they're doing is a chat-based feedback to try to sort of get more feedback from constituencies that they haven't heard from as much. Like us, the city has difficulties getting in contact with foreign language speakers and renters and things like that. There's going to be sort of a month of community comment period, and once that month ends around May, then the advisory group is going to endorse a preferred concept. And they've got sort of
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

the preliminary aspects of that set up already. I think there's a good sense of what the preferred concept is going to be, but it's still important to sort of maintain our sort of presence. This is then going to be forwarded to the boards and commissions, and then finally the City Council will vote on it themselves. So, we're starting to get the planning to the implementation, hopefully.

Mike: Okay, good. I hope that we can see the BRT two lanes going all the way through, but I don't think that's going to happen. But at least in the middle section, they'll do a one lane that could be used bidirectionally but keep the BRT in the middle, but we'll see. So, we look forward to you'll alert us once it's ready for publication, get comments, and then we can give our two cents.

Norm: Yes, I just wanted to check in on the survey. I know last time we talked, last meeting, that was in February, we talked about completing the survey online around Duke Street. Has it been reported out? That was my question.

Mike: Oh. I don't know. Dane, do you know?

Dane: I do not recall off the top of my head. Sorry. I know we forwarded a letter expressing our recommendations to them. I think the city is still trying to get feedback, input from constituents, still trying to sort of do a reach-out and do sort of a last public comment still ongoing through probably early next month.

Mike: All right, good. Thank you, Dane. And thanks for following this for us. It's good information.

- Grant application updates (AARP) Pat Wise has done a terrific job in filling out all the many paragraphs of a grant application. Do you want to just give a quick update, Pat, on that?

Pat: Sure. Yeah. We applied for an AARP Purpose Prize grant, and we are now waiting to hear if AFSS is awarded anything. There are other grants opportunities and Pat, you've been very helpful with these things. So, there's nothing in the near term, but there are some things coming down the pike. There are cycles to these grants. We're starting to learn. We got a routine on it.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets ("AFSS")

Volunteer opportunities
Other things we could be doing. So, we've been invited to participate in the Spring Fling for the Alexandria PTAs, but John Adams, F.T. Day, and William Ramsay on Saturday, April 15th, 11 to 2. So, we're going to have a table. If anybody would like to join us at that table and do outreach to -- these are elementary school kids on Beauregard. That's Saturday from 11 to 2. It's a lot of fun with the little kids running around and parents.

We already just talked about the Walk Audit, so we're looking for volunteers. If you want to get involved in a Walk Audit, some low-key technical stuff and one's in the morning and one's in the afternoon, about two hours, but please let me know. And we do definitely need some folks on the 19th.

There are other volunteer opportunities for social media and public outreach, like Farmers Market and Spring Fling. Part of our strategy is to do ground-level grassroots outreach. So, we've got these 8-by-11 flyers that are in five languages: Farsi, Mandarin, English, Spanish, and Amharic. It has the Near Miss in each language, and it says something to the effect of if you've had a close call, report it then it has the QR code. We're starting to do this in Arlington and it's getting traction. We place these 8-by-11 laminated posters around metal posts and staple them to trees at dangerous intersections. We don't know how long they'll stay, but they are -- and we're doing it in high-crash areas and in areas where, like on Beauregard and in Arlandria or other high-risk places. It's grassroots and we can use some troops to get out there and help us distribute this.

We can also distribute the new QR code 4x5 near miss cards, if somebody would take the time, walk up and down Mount Vernon or other avenues, and just go into coffee shops and little shops, leave them there, people will pick them up. It's another way to try to get the information into the hands of people. We have a huge knowledge gap of what we're doing and what the Near Miss app can do in terms of advocacy and helping to raise awareness of street safety. So, we welcome that.

Other comments:
Chris: I was just curious. You know that when the sergeant gave his report, three of the four were left-hand turns? I wonder if other people feel the same way,
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets (“AFSS”)

when I'm crossing the street, if someone's taking a left and they're behind me, I can't see them. If someone's taking a left facing me, I wonder if all of those left-hand turns were what I call the blind ones, when it's behind you. Same thing with the right-hand turn. If someone's taking a right-hand turn behind you, you don't see them. If it's in front of you, they may not see you, but you see them. And I'm wondering, do we have data on the right-hand turns and left-hand turns, whether it's in front or behind?

Mike: To my knowledge, we don't have that much granular, but we could ask. That's a very good question. I know this, there are more right-hand turning crashes, but the lethal ones, the KSIs, are left-turning crashes because the car's typically accelerating to try to get through that intersection to beat somebody, oncoming traffic.

Melissa: Mike, I've just got one quick note. It's the city budget process time of year. And I had noted this to you in an email, but the Transportation Commission had a little discussion. Essentially, our meeting this month, which was last Wednesday, was the discussion on the budget items. And our meeting is going to be the recommendation for a letter to Council on feedback on the budget. In our discussion, we all basically concluded it's a very status quo budget when it comes to transportation and Safe Streets. In other words, they're not ramping up funding, they're holding steady. And that includes, because they have to actually backfill reductions in grant monies that have been available but are not continuing. So, for instance, the transit system and the monies that are supporting the fare-free DASH, that is largely a grant that is designed to phase out, so the city has to backfill the money to help that continue to exist.

But at any rate, I would say from a transportation and a Safe Streets perspective, it's nothing to write home about. It's not necessarily moving us forward in any strategic or noticeable fashion. It's like just getting by. So, there's no additional staffing; there is enough staffing, or I should say there's the same amount of staffing as has been prior approved. There are no -- a lot of the capital improvements that are listed there, if you do take a peek at it, are funded through grants. They're not funded through city revenue, city general funds. So, it looks like, oh, this big project and that big project, but, again, they're just grants that the city has gone out for, which is great, and the city is really good at that, but it's not necessarily representing any concerted effort to invest in this area.
Alexandria’s Families for Safe Streets ("AFSS")

If you follow the Council's discussions on this, transportation is not one of their hot button issues this budget year, so it's not in their top list of Council budget priorities kind of thing. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't continue to beat the drum and make sure that they are doing their best to fund this stuff. Because what we'll just find ourselves in is following up on, what's the implementation status of the Vision Zero Action Plan? Well, we haven't been able to keep up with the plan's because they're just not putting enough money into it.

And so, overall, I would say it would be nice for AFSS maybe in next month's meeting to have a chat about sending a letter in during the public comment period, which is basically now through April, and then Council is acting in May to approve a budget, if only to just put ourselves on the record along with other interested stakeholders that we care about funding in these areas. We know they have a lot of important trade-offs to make, and they can't pay for everything all the time, but just make sure our voice is in there in those discussions. And I'm happy to participate and support that aspect of us getting a letter in.

Mike: That would be great. Thank you very much. It's an excellent point. Most importantly, we're really just trying to defend the existing budget, which is about $1 million for Complete Streets, is that right, Melissa? I tried to look at the budget and I couldn't decipher that.

Melissa: Yeah, Complete Streets is tricky because it's partially -- it's like capital-funded. It's funded in way, and so it's broken out into a couple of different places where that would show up. And really it is, by and large, just representative of the funding for staff. And there's not a lot in addition. And, you know, so that's its own hurdle because basically they've got some staff who can then implement some capital projects.

AFSS next meeting on Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 6:30 pm