

## Testimony to Alexandria City Council

### Seminary Road – Alternative 3

Good afternoon, my name is Stewart Schwartz, and I'm the Executive Director for the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a 22-year-old non-profit, partnering with a few dozen organizations on conservation, transit, bicycle/pedestrian, and affordable housing issues.

We support walkable, bike-friendly, transit-oriented communities. Council of Governments' studies have shown this to be the best way for our region to grow with less traffic, cleaner air, better health and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

**We thank the members of BPAC, Alexandrians for Safe Streets, for all they do to help make our streets safer. In response to those who critique the involvement of CSG, non-profit and volunteer advocacy organizations who win support from individual donors are a key strength of our American democracy and each has the right to speak on civic issues.**

**I especially thank the young people who are speaking today. We join them in strongly supporting Alternative 3 for Seminary Road as the safest approach and urge you to adopt it today.**

It will make the road safer for all users:

**Safer for people who drive** -- Left turns on four lanes without turn lanes risk rear ends and cause drivers to rush their turn in the face of oncoming traffic. The three-lane alternative offers a safe space, and drivers only have to cross one vehicle lane. Meanwhile, cars won't suddenly stop in front of the left of two lanes, and following cars won't make a risky weave into the right lane.

**Safer for people who walk and use transit** – including children, older people, and people with disabilities who will have safety refuges, only one car lane in each direction to cross, and 7 main crossing points made safer. The bike lanes will also provide a safety buffer for pedestrians.

DESIGN is what slows speeds and that's what Alt 3 will do.

- Slower vehicle speeds will be particularly important for safety. A significant % of vehicles are traveling 35mph or more. Federal statistics show that at 30 mph 50% of pedestrians hit by a vehicle die, and at 40 mph 90% die. The King Street design has reduced speeds by 18%.
- Many lower income residents do not own cars and take transit or bike to work. DASHBus has noted that Alt 3 will get to bus stops safer and increase ridership while not adding delay.

**Safer for people who bike** -- and more people will -- once they have safer infrastructure. Young people will be able to bike to schools and parks, others to work and stores. We certainly hope

we can increase the opportunity for our children to walk and bike to school for health – while reducing traffic.

**Safer for Emergency Response** – the city’s emergency services have noted that the three-lane with buffered bike lane design allows vehicles to pull to the side AND allows the center turn lane to be used by emergency vehicles – and is in fact much safer for emergency response.

**Study showed Minimal delay for vehicles and minimal diversion** – 10 seconds or less in the 15 min peak of the rush.

**Alternative 3 is the alternative that meets Council approved city goals in the Transportation Plan, Complete Streets Plan, VisionZero, and Environmental Plan.**

**Re crash rate – just because we haven’t killed someone yet doesn’t mean we shouldn’t act proactively to make things safer.** That’s why we have seatbelts and airbags for drivers, and smoke alarms for our homes.

**As I reflect on the opposition to traffic calming,** I understand a few of the concerns, but professional staff have effectively addressed all concerns. AND, for the reasons so many have cited, Alternative 3 will make Seminary Road objectively safer for all users.

**I have been particularly moved by the testimony of the young people today.**

I ask that we all think of the children and a world we can make better – one where our children are not trapped and restricted by high-speed roads but can safely bike and walk to school, parks and their friends’ homes. A world where we do our part to make major cuts in greenhouse gas emissions before it’s too late and the climate makes our Earth a very inhospitable place for our children and grandchildren.

Making Seminary Road safe for all users is just a small step in offering more sustainable options, but if we can’t even take this step, how are we going to take the really big steps we need to save our planet?