🚲 Preserving & Creating Safe Multimodal Access Semmes to Forest Hill

Goal: *Establish continuous, safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connecting Semmes Avenue between Woodland Heights and Westover Hills commercial node.*

⚠️ Issue Overview

Problem: The current traffic configuration at the Semmes/Forest Hill junction is built almost exclusively for car traffic, leading to friction points between other modes of transport.

- 🗺️ **Systemic Corridor Gaps:** The abrupt end of the bike lanes forces cyclists to merge into car traffic with little warning, putting both at risk.
- 🚶 **Forced behavior:** The lack of a safe cycle path through said juncture often leads to people on bikes riding on the sidewalk, which can lead to friction with pedestrians, particularly around the curve at Reedy Creek bridge.
- 🚌 **Infrastructure Obstructions:** Currently, due to lack of parking and/or designated lanes for buses by this pinchpoint, buses end up blocking the dedicated bike lane and sidewalk in order to not block car traffic. These blockages force cyclists into fast-moving traffic and push pedestrians onto the grass or street, creating significant hazards for children, families, and residents.
- 🚗 **Sudden Lane Drop:** Eastbound on Semmes/Forest Hill, the left-hand lane becomes left-turn only just past a blind curve. Drivers get little warning and often change lanes recklessly. There have been 81 vehicle crashes along this short stretch in a 5-year period according to VDOT data.

Who is impacted by this pinch point?

- Residents, commuters, and visitors traveling along Semmes and Forest Hill who experience bottlenecks (reducing vehicle travel to one lane while expanding bicycle facilities would alleviate congestion and improve safety for all users).
- Neighbors walking or biking to the South of the James Farmers Market. *(Here's one small sample of a bike accident at the Pinch Point:* *Bike Accident* *)*
- Parents and caregivers walking young children to daycare at Forest Hill Presbyterian.
- Families living west of PHSSA who seek safe, dedicated pathways home for their children without exposing them to vehicular traffic.
- Families living east of Forest Hill Park zoned for Westover Hills Elementary who lack continuous multimodal routes to school.
- People on bikes navigating the abrupt end of the bike lane at this juncture.
- Local businesses in Woodland Heights that benefit from safer street designs, calm traffic, and enhanced customer access.

- Vision Zero advocates supporting Richmond's commitment to eliminating traffic injuries and fatalities through safe roadway design.
- Blue Zones and public health advocates promoting active living, walkable neighborhoods, and connected infrastructure.
- Anyone who ever mentioned that Semmes Ave should be slower and/or safer.
- Take a peek at the missing point: https://useful.bike/post/824947046930890752/bike-lanes-and-future-bike-lanes-in-richmond-july
- Neighbors that live west of the "pinch point" and want to visit Woodland Heights businesses: a neighbor on the Forest Hill side recently shared an Instagram video highlighting the hazard while attempting to reach a Woodland Heights business (Bliss Cafe), and another Forest Hill neighbor noted in a recent email, *"and I 100% agree that the area of focus needs significant improvement. I live in Forest hill and I avoid that pinch point as much as possible."*

📣 How to Take Action: Step-by-Step Guide

✉️ Step 1: Send an Email of Support

> Send your advocacy email to the primary decision-makers, and CC key local representatives based on your neighborhood or involvement. Scroll down to the Email Template section for ready-to-use text! AND sign a petition!

🗓️ Step 2: Attend Community Meetings & Advocate

- **Woodland Heights Civic Association Meeting:** November 11th at 6:30 PM | Woodland Heights Baptist *(All neighbors are welcome)* *If you are in attendance, please ask the WHCA for a letter of support for a connected Semmes/Forest Hill.*
- **Forest Hill Neighborhood Association Meeting:** November 17th at 7:00 PM | Forest Hill Presbyterian **From FHNA President: "Forest Hill support was overwhelmingly positive. Consensus was that we would like to draft our own version of the letter and vote on it at our November 17 meeting."**
- **Swansboro West Civic Association Meeting:** Thursday, October 15th at 6:00 PM | Swansboro Elementary **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF SUPPORT!**
- **PHSSA PTA Meeting:** Reach out or help organize sharing information with families
- **Semmes Avenue Safety Committee (Zoom):** October 28th at 6:00 PM *(More details can be found here) If you are in attendance, please ask the Semmes Safety Committee for a letter of support for a connected Semmes/Forest Hill.*
- Need some sample slides for your meeting? Here's a template, feel free to modify for your group/association.

💬 Step 3: Submit FY28 Budget Feedback

- Submit feedback on the FY28 Budget to ensure that safe multimodal transportation improvements are prioritized. Your voice is an important part of that process. Please take a moment to share your priorities, ideas, and concerns through this feedback form.

🔄 Step 4: Submit RVA311 Tickets (Ongoing) + Complete RDOT Survey

- Continue to submit RVA311 tickets whenever you notice infrastructure needs or safety issues along the corridor: Submit an RVA311 Request.
- Share your experiences walking and rolling throughout Richmond. Your feedback will help shape the Pedestrian Safety Master Plan.

🙌 Step 5: Continue to Advocate for Safe Streets for All!

- Families and neighbors are asking the City of Richmond to address urgent pedestrian and bicyclist safety concerns near Westover Hills Elementary School, particularly along Jahnke Road and at the intersection of Jahnke Road and Forest Hill Avenue. Find out more and share your voice here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8ezy5ArKcHTLcj68CkTVzfnxLJ4-DablPPLoxmL1Q1pVDdQ/viewform
- **Check out Strong Towns RVA:** *Strong Towns RVA is a local affiliate of the national Strong Towns movement. We seek the creation of adaptable, fiscally sustainable, people-oriented places across the Richmond region. An important part of that is our dedication to economically productive and safe streets for all users; via our Richmond Safe Streets Campaign, we are working to help the important bicycle/pedestrian/vehicle safety efforts on Richmond's Southside. We know that community-led, incremental solutions are often the best way to create safer streets for all. If you are interested in working more on street safety, use one of the contact methods listed above or call/text Community Coordinator Jacob Sherrod at +1 (804) 625-1173.*

📇 Key Stakeholders & Contact Directory

1. Primary Decision-Makers (Put in the "TO" field)

- **Andy Boenau (Richmond Department of Transportation):** Andy.Boenau@rva.gov , askpublicworks@rva.gov
- **Patrick Herrel (Richmond Public Schools):** pherrel@rvaschools.net

2. Relevant Community Contacts (Put in the "CC" field)

Copy and paste the relevant email addresses into your email's CC field based on your neighborhood or school affiliation:

Woodland Heights / 5th District /Swansboro	Forest Hill / 4th District	Patrick Henry Charter Community	Richmond Bike Community

City Council: Stephanie.Lynch… **Woodland Heights Civic Association:** president@wood… **Springhill Neighborhood Association:** vtarchitek@gmai… austinfarrell424… **Semmes Ave Safety Committee:** pippahollowa@gm… **Swansboro West:** rvaswansborow…	**City Council:** sarah.abubaker@rv… **Neighborhood Assoc:** info@foresthillneigh… Bliley: fhblileyassn@ao… Westover Hills: westoverhillsNA@g…	**Admin:** thudson@rvaschools.net **PHSSA Board:** <antione.green@patrickhenrycharter.org>, <michael.kucera@patrickhenrycharter.org>, <justin.white@patrickhenrycharter.org> **PTA:** phssaptapres@gmail.c… **RPS School Board:** srizzi@rvaschools.net **Please know that the school based team at PHSSA can't make these changes occur, they'll need backing from above - but they can advocate for all families and neighbors.*	**BikeWalk:** bikewalkrva@sportsba… **Useful Bike:** murden@gmail.com
6th District (Manchester, Blackwell)	**9th District (Behind the Westover Node/Janke)**	**Media Outlets**	**Other Stakeholders**
City Council: ellen.robertson… **Association:** manchesterallia… **School Board:** aholton@rvaschools.net	**City Council:** nicole.jones@rva.gov **Forest View Civic Association:** korenalew@gmail.c… posthumus.lg@gm… **Cedarhurst:** cedarhurstrva@gmail.com	**The Richmonder** news@richmonder.org	**Mayor Avula:** RVAMayor@rva.gov **Richmond Budget and Strategic Planning:** AskBudget@rva.gov **VDOT:** vdotinfo@vdot.virginia.gov dale.totten@vdot.virginia.gov **LQC:** askpublicworks@rva.g…

📝 Email Template

Feel free to adapt or use the sample text below. **Adding personal stories**—such as walking children to school, navigating blocked lanes, or commuting along Semmes—helps highlight the real-world impact.

Sample Email Text:

Subject: Prioritizing Safety and Multimodal Connectivity from Semmes Avenue to Forest Hill Avenue
To: Andy.Boenau@rva.gov , askpublicworks@rva.gov , pherrel@rvaschools.net
CC: *[Relevant community contacts based on your neighborhood or affiliation from the Key Stakeholders section above]*

Dear Mr. Boenau and Mr. Herrell,

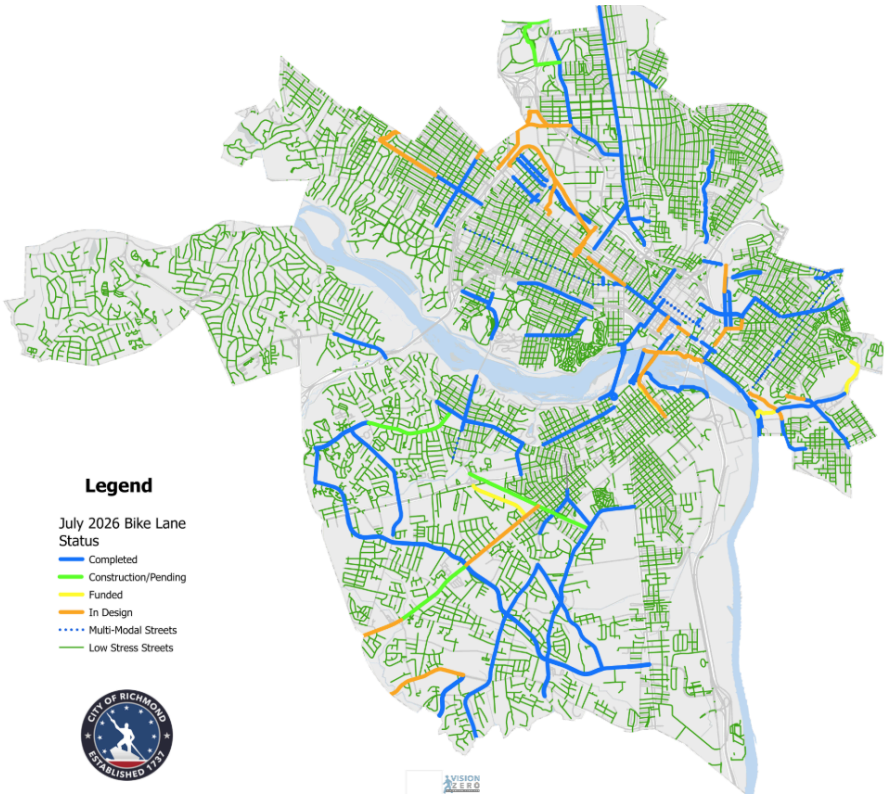
I am writing to express my strong support for establishing a continuous, safe, multimodal connection between Semmes Avenue and Forest Hill Avenue. This corridor presents a critical opportunity to design infrastructure that protects all road users and enhances mobility across our community.

Creating seamless connections along this route is vital for the safety and well-being of residents, students, commuters, and visitors. Addressing the existing "pinch point" near Reedy Creek bridge is particularly urgent, as current conditions create hazards for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists alike.

I urge the City of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools to collaborate closely with VDOT and RDOT to implement comprehensive design solutions. Dedicated bicycle infrastructure and improved pedestrian pathways through this choke point would significantly enhance safety, buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and complete missing links in our neighborhood network.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to building safe, accessible, and connected infrastructure for Richmond.


RICHMONDERS DESERVE STREETS DESIGNED FOR EVERYONE
GET INVOLVED AND LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP-VISIT:
TINYURL.COM/SEMMES2026
BIKE LANE ENDS
DEMAND SAFER STEETS



Sample Association Letters - Copy and modify for your neighborhood/civic association:

- Letter of Support - Semmes to Forest Hill Multimodal Access
- OR Civic Resolution - Semmes to Forest Hill Multimodal Connectivity
- Woodland Heights Business Email/Letter: Woodland Heights Business Node Email

📜 Additional Background & Timeline

- Overview & Analysis: Does it Have to Be Bike Lanes vs. School Buses?
- Community Feedback & correspondence *<Additional contributions welcome>*
- Previous petition
- A Call to Action for the Pinch Point on Forest

- School Zone Road Safety Assessment for PHSSA



Have you ever walked, biked, or drove the "pinch point" between Semmes and Forest Hill and wished that it was safer for everyone?

Then please let your voice be heard and advocate for change!

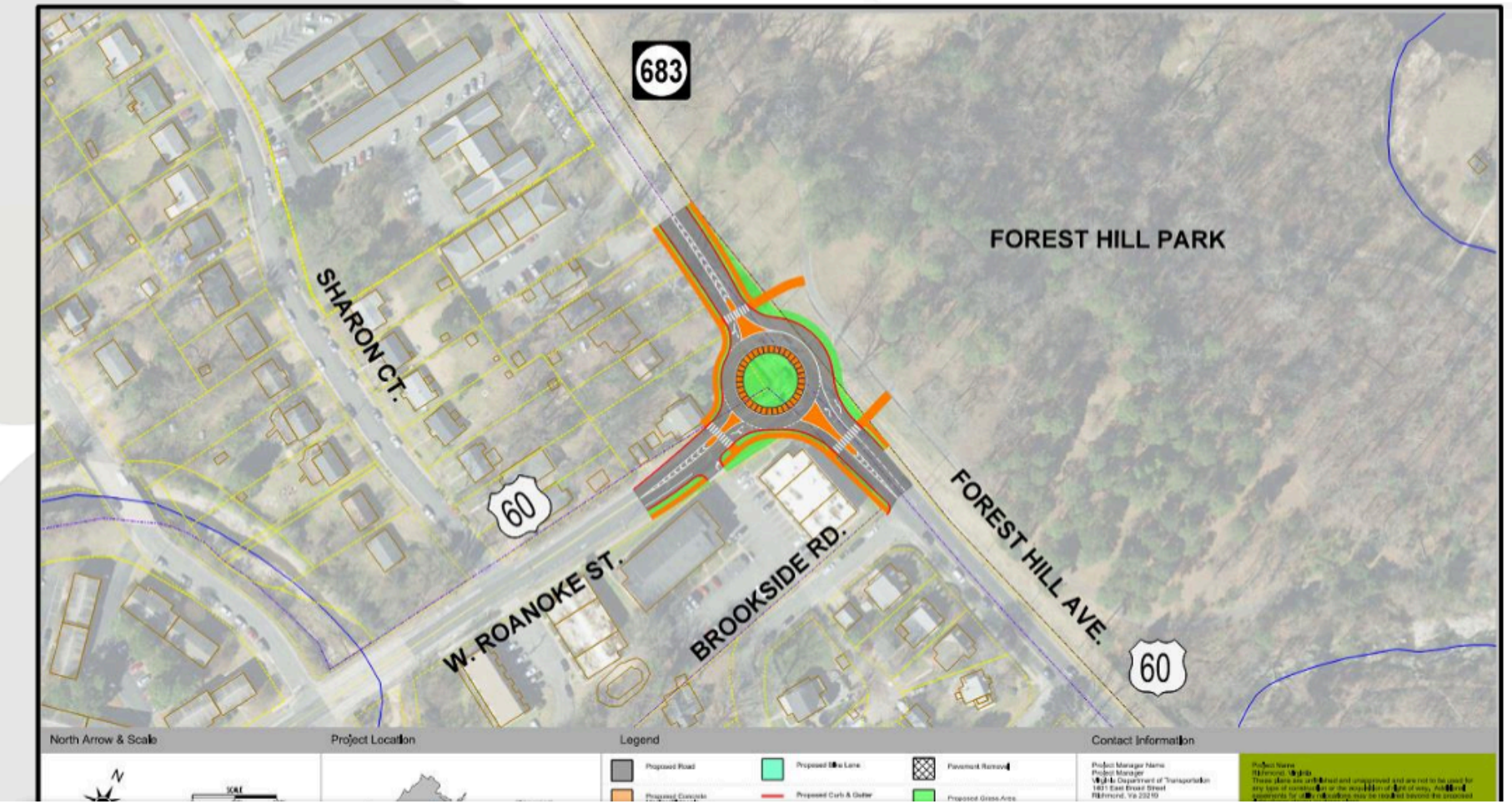
Send an email to key city change makers:

A quick template + contact information can be accessed here: tinyurl.com/semmes2026

💡 Proposed Solutions from Multimodal Activists and/or VDOT and RDOT

Project Pipeline/Smart Scale: ri01---project-pipeline-final-report---richmond---semmes-ave.pdf

Figure 2-3. Route 60 – Layout for



City of Richmond PHSSA Safety/Transportation Audit: CityofRichmond_SchoolZoneRSAs_PHSSA_01.12.26.pdf





Figure 87 Semmes Avenue Proposed Shared Transit / Bike Lane (Left)

Figure 88 Semmes Avenue proposed Buffered Bike Lane and Parking (Right)

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Forest Hill Ave & Roanoke St
Redesign
Forest Hill Ave
Forest Hill Park Loop
Roanoke St

Semmes Ave Safety Committee

Dear Semmes Avenue Neighbors,

The Semmes Avenue Safety committee will meet on Zoom on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at 6:00 PM. I know this is over a month away, but letting you know now so you can get it on your calendars. I'll send out a reminder email early that week.

We have invited representatives from the Planning and Development Review, RDOT, RPD, and Public Works to update us on a range of issues including sidewalks, bike lanes, speed data and ticketing, and more. They will be able to answer questions from attendees as well.

The zoom link is here and also below.

Feel free to share this invitation with other interested neighbors.

Sincerely,
Pippa Holloway

2510 Semmes Avenue
pippaholloway@gmail.com

Semmes Avenue Safety Committee

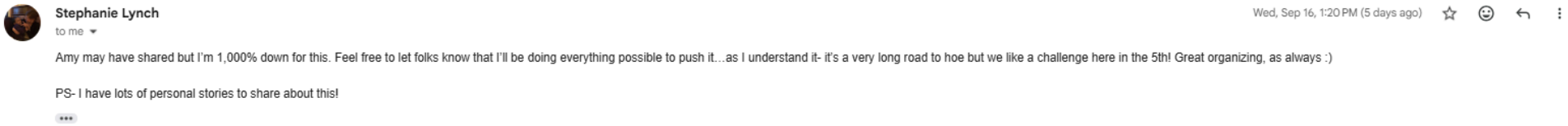
Join Zoom Meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85015402943?pwd=Rk8xdWFIQnhuQk16R0xXRWZRbGxjUT09

Meeting ID: 850 1540 2943 Passcode: 938443
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Sign up for Access Newsletter (Department of Public Works):
https://rva.us18.list-manage.com/profile?u=f99abcad558960f82c27f3ada&id=7d89dcce2d&e=745dcd3cc9&c=2641de44b6
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Sample Association Letters

- Civic Resolution - Semmes to Forest Hill Multimodal Connectivity
- Letter of Support - Semmes to Forest Hill Multimodal Access

Wednesday, September 16th



Stephanie Lynch
to me

Wed, Sep 16, 1:20 PM (5 days ago)

Amy may have shared but I'm 1,000% down for this. Feel free to let folks know that I'll be doing everything possible to push it...as I understand it- it's a very long road to hoe but we like a challenge here in the 5th! Great organizing, as always :)

PS- I have lots of personal stories to share about this!

•••

January 2026

Previous petition by Michael: https://c.org/pVpNCWLPs7

Strong Towns RVA

Strong Towns RVA is a local affiliate of the national Strong Towns movement. We dedicate ourselves to productive, incremental, dense, & locally responsive land use and growth patterns; abundant, naturally affordable housing; economically productive and safe streets for all users; financially sound, low-cost multimodal transportation options; and effective, efficient and fiscally responsible local governments and budgeting across the Richmond region.

Via our Richmond Safe Streets Campaign, we are working to help the important bicycle/pedestrian/vehicle safety efforts on Richmond's Southside. We know that community-led, incremental solutions are often the best way to create safer streets for all.

If you are interested in working more on street safety, shoot us a message at strongtownsrva@gmail.com, use one of the contact methods listed above, or call/text Community Coordinator Jacob Sherrod at +1 (804) 625-1173.