

Transportation, Growth and Development



VDOT completed its study of HOV-lane usage in the I-395/I-95 corridor identifying Seminary Road as a location for a new ramp serving north and south-bound HOV traffic. No decision has been made on changes to the HOV network. In the interim, the City plans to use \$150,000 in VDOT funds to evaluate alternative ramp connections at Seminary Road.

One of the City's top economic development goals is to improve local, regional, state and federal transportation systems. Transportation issues are of major concern to the residents of the City and the region as growth and development continue to be fueled by a strong local and regional economy, resulting in new and expanded employment centers in the suburbs and increased traffic congestion. As a densely populated suburban city, Alexandria has been an advocate of all forms of mass transit, and the City has sought creative ways to expand bus and rail ridership as the number of jobs in Alexandria has reached the highest point in the City's history.

Transportation

WOODROW WILSON BRIDGE

The replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge is one of the region's top transportation priorities, and the City has taken an active role in the discussion of bridge replacement alternatives.

In February, City Council agreed to settle its suit challenging the federal government's decision to construct a 12-lane replacement for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Terms of the settlement included:

1. The construction of a 12-lane bridge that initially operates as a 10-lane facility. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) agreed to continue this operation until significant High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) facilities were operational on either side of the bridge;
2. Improvements to the Jones Point area with a large urban deck over the Beltway in the vicinity of Washington Street, including extensive landscaping, pedestrian trails and other amenities, recreation fields, and restoration of significant historic and archaeological sites and facilities; and
3. A new access route between the Beltway and Eisenhower Avenue, to relieve the current traffic congestion on U. S. Route 1, Duke Street, Telegraph Road and other streets in the network.

In April, in a separate lawsuit filed by a citizens' group, a federal court ruled that FHWA's decision to proceed with a 12-lane replacement bridge did not comply with environmental statutes. The federal government is appealing the ruling and a decision is expected by December. In the meantime, planning and design work on the bridge is moving forward as funding sources are sought.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA 2020 TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In spring 1998, local elected officials in Northern Virginia, including Alexandria, initiated the development of an updated 20-year transportation plan for the region. During its 1999 session, the General Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution No. 434, which called for the plan to be completed in time for submission to the Governor and General Assembly in January 2000. The 2020 Plan, which was prepared by VDOT, proposes a regional transit and highway infrastructure that will support the level of development and quality of life desired in the region for the next 20 years. The plan will be discussed by City Council and the Alexandria community in September. The final plan is scheduled to be presented to the General Assembly in December 1999.

LOCAL TRAFFIC CONTROL INITIATIVES

In 1999, City Council sought community input from the City's 80 civic associations on local traffic and transportation issues. Citizen responses, which Council received and discussed in late spring, included concerns about red light running, speeding, cut-through traffic and traffic signal synchronization, as well as individual neighborhood traffic safety concerns. In October, City Council will receive and discuss a staff report summarizing the issues raised and possible solutions.

The City is upgrading its computerized traffic signal system, which affects about 150 of 230 signalized intersections. The upgrade of the 1972 system introduces more up-to-date computer technology and ensures compliance with Y2K computer changes.

In 1999, City Council approved additional measures to enhance the City's existing red-light traffic camera sites by modifying the cameras and making them more visible by painting the base, pole and camera housing a bright color. The red light traffic camera on South Patrick Street will be more visible to motorists with the addition of a blinking light. Red-light traffic camera equipment has been installed at the intersection of Duke Street and West Taylor Run Parkway, an intersection where red-light running has been a problem. City staff also is studying speed control reduction suggestions, which include reducing speed limits from 35 mph to 25 mph and from 35 mph to 30 mph at locations such as Edsall Road, near the City limits, and Yoakum Parkway and Stevenson Avenue, near the City limits.

Growth and Development

Construction is continuing at Cameron Station, which includes a total of 2,500 housing units, two major City parks and an elementary school. The new development has attracted many homebuyers to the City.



As Alexandria enters the 21st century, City Council has just approved a proposal for the last major unplanned development site in the City: Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens, and City Council will consider the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) at the Carlyle site in the fall.

Commonwealth Atlantic Properties (CAP) proposes to develop the remainder of the City's 295-acre portion of Potomac Yard. During the summer and fall of 1998, CAP initiated a series of meetings to build consensus on its Concept Plan. In spring 1999, CAP submitted a proposal that included 1.9 million net square feet of office space, a 625-room hotel, 735,000 net square feet of retail space (including 600,000 square feet at the existing Potomac Yard Retail Center), 1,927 residential units and 61 acres of open space. City Council approved the application on September 8, 1999.

The Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens developer estimated that the development will generate \$13 million per year at full build-out. While discussions continue regarding the possible realignment of the Monroe Avenue bridge, there are no current sources of funding for the realignment at this time. Discussions about traffic and mass transit options such as a new Metro station and light rail also will need to be linked to obtaining the necessary funding to pursue additional transportation alternatives.

Concurrently, CAP submitted a site plan to Arlington County for the redevelopment of the Arlington County portion of the Yard. This plan included a mix of 4 million square feet of mostly office space with some high rise residential and supporting retail.

The other major proposal that will be discussed by City Council this fall is the relocation of the headquarters of the PTO. In December 1994, the Alexandria City Council unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing PTO's relocation to Alexandria, a move that would generate jobs and development and would be a stable source of growth and prosperity for the City. The General Services Administration announced its Record of Decision to locate PTO at the Carlyle site in June 1999. LCOR, Incorporated, the developer of the project, estimates that the development will bring 7,100 new PTO employees to the City and will generate approximately \$6.4 million each year in tax revenues. Construction is scheduled to begin mid-2000, with move-in beginning in 2003 and full build-out expected by 2004. The site is located south of Duke Street, between the King Street and the Eisenhower Avenue Metro stations.

In April 1990, the Carlyle site was approved for a large, mixed-use development in the City's Master Plan, and

the square footage required by the PTO is well within authorized limits. The location of a commercial entity of this magnitude has advantages and disadvantages. One of the benefits of the PTO coming to the Carlyle site is that a single user allows the infrastructure improvements to be made in a much shorter time. In addition, employees of the PTO already are among the heaviest users of mass transit and car pooling of any commercial or governmental body in the country. It is anticipated that PTO employees will continue to take advantage of the mass transit systems already in place, including Metro, Virginia Railway Express and Amtrak. Other efforts to ease the traffic impact on the City will include promoting car and van pools, administering a ride-sharing program, providing on-site sale of discounted bus and rail fare tickets and implementing staggered work hours. This fall, City Council will consider and address the impact that additional traffic generated by the development will have on the City.

The landscape of the City is visibly changing as a result of residential construction. Over the past year, there have been nearly 3,000 housing units under construction and another 3,384 either approved or proposed for development in the City. Cameron Station, one of the City's largest residential developments, has significantly altered the face of Duke Street and the West End with more than 1,000 housing units currently under construction and long-range plans to build more. Plans for residential development also include the construction of a 588-unit apartment complex, Lincoln at Alexandria, near the Jack Taylor Toyota dealership on Jefferson Davis Highway.

All of these projects will have positive economic impacts for the City. Addressing the transportation issues for these projects and ensuring that the City's unique quality of life is preserved and maintained are important goals that will be addressed in the months ahead.