

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 20, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #46: IMPLEMENTING A FREE WEST END TROLLEY SERVICE

This memorandum is in response to Councilwoman Hughes' request at the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) budget work session for the cost and options to operate free trolley service in the City's West End.

A West End Trolley would potentially provide service to and from the Van Dorn Metrorail Station and serve communities such as Cameron Station, Landmark, and Foxchase. A preliminary estimate of the annual cost to provide such service is approximately \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million, assuming the service would be provided by a contractor with no upfront capital cost. Funding for this service is not included in the FY 2013 proposed operating budget or the TIP. The addition of West End trolley service to the TIP without an increase in funding would require reductions or cancellation of other previously planned and approved transportation improvements and would require planning and outreach prior to implementation.

Currently, Council's direction and staff efforts are focused on planning and implementing the Corridor "C" high capacity transitway in the City's West End. This will entail a substantial future investment of public and private funds for capital and operational costs.

If staff were asked to initiate a process for developing West End trolley service, the following chart, in conjunction with attached trolley concept map, illustrates the range of options that could be considered and the costs, numbers of trolleys used on the route, the frequency headways, and the distances of routes.

| West End Trolley Cost Estimates | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Concept Service (see key at bottom & attached concept map) | No. of Trolleys Required to Operate Service Not Including Spare Vehicles | Headways (Frequency) | Hours of Operation (based on King Street Trolley Hours + CPI) | Estimated Annual Cost to Operate (based on existing contract cost) | Additional Initial Cost (branding, marketing, painting, signs) | Total Estimated Cost for First Year |
| Routes A, B, C, or D | 5 trolleys | 15 Minutes | 11:30 am - 10:30 PM | \$1,490,000 | \$50,000 | \$1,540,000 |
| Routes A, B, C, or D | 5 trolleys | 20 Minutes | 11:30 am - 10:30 PM | \$1,490,000 | \$50,000 | \$1,540,000 |
| Routes A, B, C, or D | 4 trolleys | 30 Minutes | 11:30 am - 10:30 PM | \$1,200,000 | \$45,000 | \$1,245,000 |

Notes:

All Routes And Cost Estimates Are Conceptual, Will Need Further Analysis

Assume Service Is Free With No Fare Box Recovery

Route A - Van Dorn Metro to Van Dorn Street to Duke Street (Foxchase)

Route B - Van Dorn Metro to Van Dorn Street to Edsall Road to Reynolds Street to Duke Street (Foxchase)

Route C - Van Dorn Metro to Edsall Road to Pickett Street to Duke Street (Foxchase)

Route D - Van Dorn Metro to Edsall to Cameron Station Blvd to Duke Street (Foxchase)

The following is a summary of some of the transportation improvements currently planned for the West End.

Landmark /Van Dorn Corridor Transportation Improvements

The Landmark /Van Dorn Corridor Plan was completed in 2009, and it was incorporated into the City’s Master Plan. The plan envisions the redevelopment of Landmark Mall and the major parcels to the south as a lively, mixed-use town center for Alexandria's West End. The plan recommends a walkable grid of urban blocks, and a new bridge over Duke Street to connect Landmark Mall to the rest of the town center and to other neighborhoods to the south.

The Transportation element of the plan recommends more frequent, reliable regional and local transit service, with connections to and between activity centers and the Van Dorn Street Metrorail station. These transit services would be enhanced through a number of transit improvements, including a transitway (transit boulevard) along Van Dorn Street, as well as a transitway along Duke Street. These transitways were initially recommended in the Transportation chapter of the City’s Master Plan (adopted in 2008). In addition, the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan recommends a new transit center within the Landmark Mall site. This transit center would support redevelopment of the mall, reduce the travel time on bus routes, make transfers more convenient for passengers, and accommodate features such as 8 to 10 bus bays, a climate controlled interior waiting area, and real-time transit information.

The Beauregard Small Area Plan, Landmark /Van Dorn Corridor Plan, and the DASH Long Range Plan identify expanding local transit circulator routes, including the Landmark/Van Dorn area. Circulators could run as regular, frequent short loops between the Van Dorn Metrorail station, Landmark Mall, and residential areas. A circulator type of service would be dependent on further examination of restructuring existing transit routes, and would have more success once the Landmark area is redeveloped and the future transit center is constructed.

Establishing a West End Trolley would involve the following:

- An understanding of the community’s needs and most effective routing of the trolley
- Goals and objectives for the trolley service

- Market, demand, and projected ridership analysis
- Route analysis to assess travel time, turning movements, and stop locations
- More detail cost and benefit evaluation
- Evaluation of existing and future WMATA, DASH, and Fairfax Connector Routes
- Branding and Marketing Campaign
- Finding a vendor through an RFP process to provide vehicles and operate the service OR procure vehicles and operate the service through DASH