

Crystal City / Potomac Yard Transit Corridor

On June 15, 1999, the Alexandria City Council adopted a Development Concept Plan for Potomac Yard south of Four-Mile Run. Since that time, a significant level of transit service has been recognized as a critical element in this plan. The type(s) of transit service needed to serve this area was evaluated through a series of studies performed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, working cooperatively with the City of Alexandria and Arlington County. These studies explored the feasibility of several types of high-quality transit in the corridor, including expanded bus services, light rail and bus rapid transit, and additional Metrorail stations, through a preliminary feasibility study, an alternatives analysis, a short-term implementation plan, and an environmental analysis. The transit concept that emerged from these studies is one in which dedicated transit lanes that are compatible with the operating requirements of bus rapid or light rail transit are provided to bypass areas of significant roadway congestion in the corridor. The initial service concept for this corridor is high-quality bus rapid transit; however, as demand and usage may increase, conversion to light rail transit is possible. This type service is not currently available in either Alexandria or Arlington County.

At this time, Arlington County expects to begin construction of the first segment of the dedicated transit corridor, South Glebe Street to 26th Street, in 2007. This portion of the corridor is most urgently needed to keep pace with new developments being constructed in the Arlington County portion of Potomac Yard. Development in the Alexandria portion of Potomac Yard lags behind that in Arlington County and it is expected that the first new housing units in Alexandria will not be constructed until sometime in 2008.

Since all previous studies have indicated how important transit is as the lifeline of Potomac Yard development, a service design has been developed for Potomac Yard which will provide high-quality transit service throughout the Crystal City / Potomac Yard area.

In Alexandria, the service design calls for a transit corridor to be implemented between the Braddock Road Metro station and the Arlington corridor at Potomac Avenue and Four Mile Run (see Exhibit 1). The transit service will initially be provided by new transit vehicles operating on compressed natural gas. From the Braddock Road Metro station, the route travels Madison Street, Fayette Street, and First Street to Route 1, where it turns north. Initially, transit will operate in mixed traffic until crossing the Monroe Avenue bridge. The route then enters dedicated transit lanes, continuing north on Route 1 to East Glebe Road, east on East Glebe through the Potomac Yard Town Center and north on Potomac Avenue through Potomac Yard Retail Center to South Glebe Road. After entering Arlington County, it will travel on Arlington's exclusive transit lanes and other facilities. The routing from East Glebe north is contingent upon the redevelopment plans of the Potomac Yard Retail Center, which is considering redevelopment options. Currently, the Alexandria community and staff are considering whether the configuration of the transit corridor along Route 1 will be located in the median or curbside. A determination on this question will be made in the near future.

The planned locations for transit stations along this corridor in Alexandria are the Braddock Road Metrorail Station, First Street and Fayette, Route 1 and Slater's Lane, Potomac Avenue and Route 1, East Custis Avenue and Route 1, Swann Avenue and Route 1, Hume Street, Potomac Yard Town Center, Potomac Yard Shopping Center Central, and Potomac Yard Shopping Center North. These stations will provide dual-door, level boarding platforms and passenger amenities such as shelters, wind screens, benches, maps, and real-time bus information displays. See Exhibit 2 for an example of a similar facility located on a bus rapid transit corridor in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Current plans call for four transit services in the corridor. The primary one is service which will run from the Braddock Road Metro station to the Pentagon. Ultimately this route is planned to operate at 5 minute headways in the peak and 6.5 minute headways in the off-peak. Conscious of the fact that density in Arlington County's portion of Potomac Yard is higher than that in Alexandria, a second service will be provided from the Potomac Yard Town Center to the Pentagon. This service is planned to have 5 minute headways during the peak, and will not operate during the off-peak. The third service will travel from the Potomac Yard Town Center to Pentagon City. This service is planned to have 10 minute peak headways and 15 minute off-peak headways. The fourth service will be provided by Alexandria's DASH system, providing services along Main Street in Potomac Yard which will travel from the Potomac Yard Town Center to other locations in Alexandria via Main Street.

This service will initially be operated using new very-low emissions CNG-powered buses based at the WMATA operating garage at Four Mile Run, which are equipped with all of the most modern amenities including low floors for wheelchair accessibility, and automatic annunciators which display information about the bus' location through digital and audio means. See Exhibit 3 for an example of the type of bus which will initially operate on this route. As demand and usage increases, higher-capacity, specialized vehicles or alternative transit systems may be operated in this corridor.

The level of transit service in Potomac Yard will be considerably higher than is being offered in any other part of Alexandria. Thus, there should be a very strong inducement to use transit by residents, retail customers, and office workers in the Yard.

Exhibit 1: Potomac Yard Transit Corridor Alignment in Alexandria

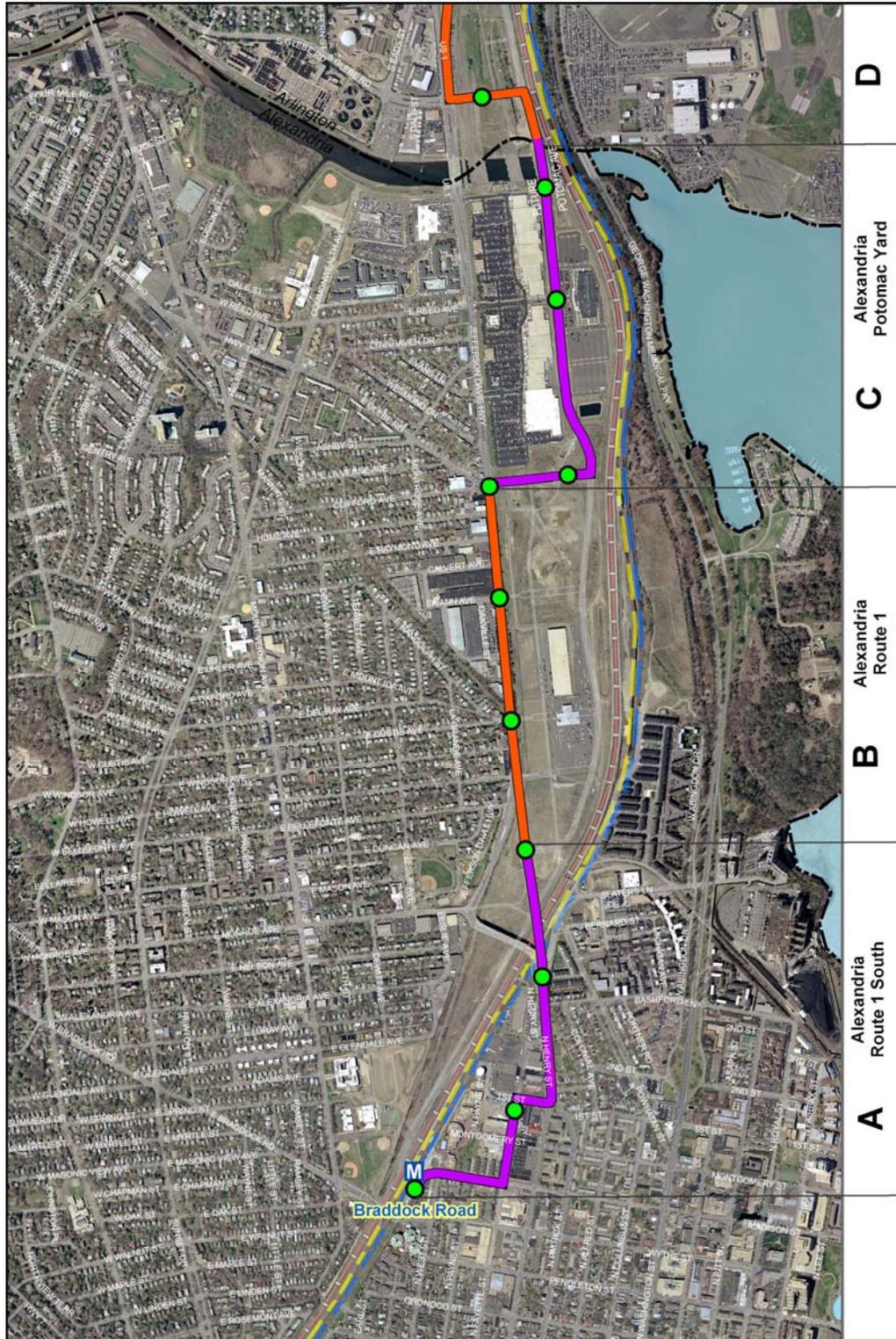


Exhibit 2: Example Bus Rapid Transit Station
(Vancouver, BC)



Exhibit 3: Transit Vehicles Initially Operating in the Transit Corridor

