

Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group
Meeting Summary
November 19, 2009

Work Group Members:

William Euille
Timothy Lovain
Jennifer Mitchell
Noah Teates
Eric Wagner

City Staff:

Mark Jinks
Rich Baier
Tom Culpepper
Jeff Farner
Valerie Peterson
Karl Moritz

Approximately 30 Members of the Public were in attendance.

Meeting Summary:

Tim Lovain started the meeting, and Bill Euille made some opening remarks including that the Work Group will be an informal group with no chair that will discuss, strategize and plan. The analysis will be staff driven, particularly by WMATA staff. The group will meet on an as needed basis, so will not have regularly scheduled meetings.

Rich Baier reiterated the function of the group as a working group, with staff support from the City Manager's office, Planning and Zoning, WMATA, and Transportation and Environmental Services.

Jeff Farner made a presentation on the development history in Potomac Yard, and on the progress of the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG), which has held four meetings and a community workshop to plan for Landbay F, where the retail center is currently located and adjacent to the potential future Metro station being considered. Jeff clarified that there are not currently development triggers for Metro as there were for the Route 1 bridge.

Tom Culpepper gave a presentation on the process for the Work Group. Phase I of the process includes analyses on: station location, concept refinements, financial plan, ridership estimates, and the environmental scan. Phase II is the environmental analysis. Tom also discussed the three potential station options that will be studied, which include the existing reserve area, a location further north along the track to serve both Landbays G and F, or a third and likely much more costly location as a new underground station in the middle of Landbay F. On February 26, the WMATA board will officially consider the Potomac Yard station as a project, which initiates the Phase I analysis.

Mark Jinks discussed how the study will also look at how much tax revenue will be generated for the city by development. He thought that it would probably be 10+ years until full build out. Metro will add value, so the analysis will need to consider how much added value the Metro brings and how much can be given back. Other potential funding sources for the Metro station include State, Federal, and development dollars. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a possible funding option as well. The financial analysis will look at all of these options, and will also consider optimal phasing as well. Tim Lovain identified the mix of uses as a critical factor.

Noah Teates asked if the city could prepare a summary of past investments of similar magnitude as the Metro station, and include any lessons learned.

Eric Wagner discussed how the PYPAG is interested in exploring the potential for a land swap with Landbay L and the Braddock Fields to put any development closer to the Braddock Metro Station and maximize its use.

Tom Culpepper stated that in 2003, the existing reserve area for the Potomac Yard Metro station was identified along the current track alignment, and it was identified at that time as the best potential location in concept. There is approximately 250-300 feet from the center of the Metro station concept to the west side of the tracks.

Boyd Walker asked about the possibility of phasing in Metro, starting with the Potomac Greens side first, and then phasing in the west side when the funds were available. He pointed out that there is money to build a pedestrian bridge that could be allocated to supplement the Metro station cost. Tom Culpepper responded that the pedestrian bridge crossing is probably the least costly part of the Metro station construction. He continued that at least 23 feet of clearance is required above the CSX tracks.

Jim Ashe, the WMATA environmental expert, said he will be working on the NEPA and Section 106 processes should they come in to play if financed by the Federal Government. He stressed the need to be coordinating with the National Park Service. Mark Jinks said that the city will be exploring how any potential plans impact the GW Parkway.

Tom Culpepper discussed the three locations under consideration for the location options analysis, which include: the existing reserve area, a location slightly north of the existing reserve area, and an underground option in the middle of Landbay F. Tom stated that the underground location in the middle of Landbay F would likely be two to three times the cost of the other locations. The evaluation for the station location options will be both technical and qualitative. The existing station reserve area includes townhouses in the walkshed, and if shifted further north could capture more density in the walkshed with the future development in Landbay F. All of this will be considered in the location options analysis. He asked the group if there were other issues that need to be addressed in the analysis, and Bill Euille asked that we send the graphic of the location options to them.

Noah Teates asked how many dollars per square foot the Metro station brings in. Tom Culpepper said that it is difficult to reduce all items to a number, but that the study would be doing a cost-benefit analysis. Eric Wagner suggested that a threshold analysis be done first to assess if significant barriers may eliminate a potential location option early in the process. Tom said that staff would do a quick threshold analysis and bring it back to the group to consider how to proceed, with any draft materials sent to them via email. He also talked about the need to have information regarding the options to the PYPAG at its April 21 meeting.

Boyd Walker asked about the potential for light rail through the Yard. Tim Lovain identified the need to think about whether transit should connect with the new Metro station.

The next meeting of the Metro Work Group will be on either March 25 or April 8. Staff will see which date is better from a timing perspective, and get back to group members.

Public Comments:

There was a question if the property owners have expressed a preference of location. Much depends on funding issues. For the Metrorail Station Report that Mark prepared, he included as a base assumption heights of 60 to 110 feet in Landbay F, similar to Landbay G.

There was a question about the possibility of a shuttle, and a desire for continued access to a Metro station from Potomac Greens. The city has not started any detailed planning for extra transit because the Metro station is not officially approved. The current reserve area would allow for an at-grade entry on the Potomac Greens side of the tracks.

Tim Lovain addressed a question regarding impacts on existing residents who may no longer be in the Metro watershed if it is relocated. He mentioned that he thinks there is potential to connect the transit line to the Metro.

Mark Jinks responded to a question regarding funding, clarifying that the Potomac Yard Metro project is probably not far enough along to benefit from the Federal stimulus package.

There was a request to consider adequate facilities to protect riders from exposure to the elements. There was also a comment in support of an underground station in the middle of the Yard.

David Hayes from the National Park Service mentioned his presence at the meeting, and that they were scheduled to meet with the city soon to discuss coordination and issues.

Jeff Farner addressed a question regarding the pedestrian bridge. The Potomac Yard developers have to give money toward the pedestrian bridge, which could be incorporated in to the Metro access. If the Metro is not constructed, the Potomac Yard

developers still need to pay to build a bridge. There is an obligation for a recreational pedestrian bridge.