Braddock Road Metro Station: Joint Development and Station Planning

Community Meeting
June 26, 2014, 7:00-9:00pm
Charles Houston Recreation Center

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting notes are recorded by AECOM, WMATA, and City staff to provide a written record of principal items of discussion and comments from the public. They are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Meeting Goals

- Introduce WMATA's Joint Development Request for Proposals (RFP) Process and Transit Needs
- Present General Overview of Braddock Metro Neighborhood Small Area Plan (BMNP) and Implementation Progress
- Obtain Public Input on Braddock Metro Station

Presenters

- Susan Eddy, City of Alexandria (Alexandria)
- Stan Wall, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Additional City and Agency Staff

Brandi Collins, Alexandria/Department of Planning and Zoning
Nathan Imm, Alexandria/Department of Planning and Zoning
Jim Maslanka, Alexandria/Transportation and Environmental Services
Robin McElhenny, WMATA
Sara Benson, WMATA
James Gast, AECOM
Joyce Tsepas, AECOM
Stephanie Landrum, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Christina Mindrup, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Helen McIlvaine, Alexandria/Office of Housing
Connie Staudinger, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Summary of Public Comments

1. LAND USE

a. Seems like a hotel will add to traffic congestion problem. Aren't its travel/commute patterns the same as residential?
b. Would like 0 population growth, i.e. no residential; there is too much growth in the area, why add more to the Metro Station?
c. Would prefer an office building
d. Would like to see a grocery store
e. Would like to see a restaurant

f. The station needs amenities and enough daytime traffic to support retail
g. Can retail be located in a way that better relates to the existing retail on along Braddock Rd.?
h. Would WMATA attempt to build residential despite the BMNP calling for office and hotel?
   WMATA Staff Response:
   i. WMATA will consider postponing redevelopment until the economic climate would support the type of land use and development that the BMNP supports.
i. Is this project being timed and coordinated with redevelopment of area's public housing properties?
   City Staff Response:
   i. AHRA has an RFP out now and will know redevelopment sequencing in 2015, which may coincide with the WMATA redevelopment
   ii. WMATA's joint development plans will not include any additional land beyond their property lines

SITE DESIGN

a. Who is drafting the development guidelines?
   City and WMATA Staff Response:
   i. City Staff will draft development guidelines for urban design/character (based on BMNP)
   ii. BMNP recommends a contemporary design (CLARIFICATION: The BMNP recommends "modern architecture" with a use of building materials that "reflect industrial heritage of the neighborhood")
   iii. WMATA will determine operations requirements
   iv. Development Guidelines address program, planning, and financial requirements but not the specific details of the architecture. Design/architecture will be determined through the City's Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) process.
b. Do not want buildings above 77' (would like lower building heights and buildings to step down/relate to adjacent uses)
   City Staff Response:
   i. Current zoning classification is utility and transportation (UT) and doesn't allow for redevelopment. A rezoning is required in order to redevelop this site.
   ii. Small Area Plan recommends an FAR of 3.0 and height of 77'
   iii. If the community wants more or less height as part of this process, the BMNP would need to be amended
   iv. Zoning Ordinance allows more height if affordable housing is developed but this site is not planned for residential development per the BMNP
c. Hard to imagine a redeveloped site that is dense and includes necessary transit infrastructure
   WMATA Staff Response:
   i. WMATA's test fits will help determine what can fit on the site
d. Could the station be lowered to allow for more development?
   WMATA Staff Response:
   i. The current metro station will not be altered

ii. This would make the project too expensive to redevelop

e. Flooding issue at Braddock Road and West needs to be addressed as part of the development.
   City Staff Response:
   iii. City stormwater requirements for the Braddock Neighborhood require over-detention of stormwater at Braddock Metro Station site
j. The flooding/stormwater issues at the intersection of Braddock/West/Wythe need to be addressed

2. PEDESTRIAN/BIKE ACCESS AND SAFETY

a. There are many pedestrian safety issues that need to be addressed to and from the station now; like safe pedestrian crossings on West St.
b. Could there be an overpass north of the station for pedestrians from the northwest?
c. Crossing West St. from Madison is not safe for pedestrian –there is no signal
d. There is not a crosswalk midblock on West Street where the existing Metro Station internal pathway directs pedestrians
e. There needs to be safer pedestrian routes to Metro Station from west side of tracks
f. Bike connections are bad from north of Metro Station
g. Better bike and pedestrian connections to the north of the station
h. Need more bike racks and bike parking at station (currently bikes are chained to railings)
   WMATA Staff Response:
   i. WMATA will install secure bicycle parking
i. Underpass improvements need to be made on Braddock Rd.
j. Look at signal at Braddock and West because the timing is unsafe for pedestrians
k. As population increases the City needs to prioritize safe sidewalks and walkability
l. Several people noted that the existing hedge surrounding the station site is overgrown and is encroaching on the sidewalk
m. There should be plantings, landscaping and open space

3. STATION AREA AND FACILITIES

a. Need to enlarge the gated entrance to the station to eliminate chokepoints (these are the gates/bars that separate the outside area from the faregate area)
b. Consider adding faregates to help with station congestion at rush hours
c. Consider adding staircases at station to help with vertical circulation
d. Station needs public restrooms
e. Will the station remain operational during construction?
   WMATA Staff Response:
   i. Yes. A temporary facilities plan will be developed.
f. Consider adding transit police substation as part of joint development to help with facility oversight
g. Weatherize the station by replacing existing tiles with outdoor tiles and extending the canopy on the platform to provide better protection from snow and rain

4. VEHICULAR ACCESS

a. Traffic is an issue on Braddock Rd. and surrounding the station (on Fayette St.)

City and WMATA Staff Response:

i. There will not be a traffic study as part of the joint development study
ii. The traffic study needs to be based an actual development project to ensure that the models accurately reflect current/expected conditions. Therefore, a traffic study will be required after a developer has initiated the development review process with City.

b. Need to make sure that any measures to mitigate traffic impacts don't make things worse for pedestrians
c. Will there be parking at the redeveloped site?
WMATA and City Staff Response:
    i. There will be no commuter parking at the Metro Station, but there will be underground parking for the development
d. Kiss and Ride is important to community
    i. Do not want Kiss and Ride to be relocated on-street –dangerous for pedestrians
    ii. There is existing Kiss and Ride activity on adjacent private property, which is a nuisance to some residents. Can we make the Metro Station Kiss and Ride more easily accessible to address this issue?

5. TRANSIT & SERVICE

a. Concerned that new development will over extend the current operational capacity at the metro station.
WMATA Staff Response:
    i. If the site is developed as office the commuting patterns will not have a negative impact on peak hour service. The office workers will be traveling on inbound trains and Braddock residents will be traveling on outbound trains – opposite commute pattern.
b. BRT is going to be good but will make the area even busier
City Staff Response:
    i. Headways are anticipated to be 6 minutes during rush hour
c. There is standing room only on Metro trains (need better level of service)
WMATA Staff Response
    i. WMATA has long-term plans to improve core capacity

6. FEASIBILITY

a. Is the project feasible?
WMATA Staff Response:
    i. This will be determined through the joint development study
    ii. If the project isn't financially feasible WMATA will wait until the economic conditions improve or WMATA will need a subsidy to redevelop
b. Why isn't Metro fixing the system that we have rather than dabbling in development?
c. Will revenue go back into transit improvements in the Braddock community?
WMATA Staff Response:
    i. Revenue will be added to WMATA's capital fund for system wide improvements

7. **PROCESS**
    a. Why are there only two public meetings as part of the study?
    City and WMATA Staff Response:
        i. The team will consider adding another public meeting to the study
        ii. There will be numerous opportunities for the public to weigh in at various stages after the study
        iii. Residents will be kept in the loop about the study if they provided their email address and/or sign up for the City's eNews Service (www.alexandriava.gov/enews)