Docket Item #7
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2005-0006
Potomac Yard

Planning Commission Meeting
April 4, 2006

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for a revision to the transportation chapter of the City's Master Plan to designate Route 1-Jefferson Davis Highway as the route for transit.

APPLICANT: Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
Department of Planning & Zoning

LOCATION: For the properties bounded by Four Mile Run, Jefferson Davis Highway, Braddock Road, Slater's Lane and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, APRIL 22, 2006: City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation, with the inclusion of language on exclusive transit use, which will come back in the ordinance language.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, APRIL 4, 2006: On a motion by Mr. Komoroske, seconded by Mr. Jennings, the Planning Commission voted to adopt the resolution amending the transportation chapter of the City's Master Plan to designate Route 1-Jefferson Davis Highway as the route for transit. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission generally agreed with the staff's recommendation and input from the community that it was appropriate to designate Route 1-Jefferson Davis Highway as the route for transit.

Speakers:

David Fromm, resident, commented that transit should have been better planned to be internal to Potomac Yard. Mr. Fromm stated that if BRT is going to be on Route 1, then the transit route should be continued all the way up Route 1 to Arlington and not connect in the Town Center.

Amy Slack, resident, felt a BRT on Main Street was a better option than on Route 1.

Katy Cannady, resident, stated the best location for BRT would be on Main Street and not in Route 1.

Boyd Walker, resident, believes Route 1 should not be the location for transit. Stated Main Street should be designated as transit corridor.

Eric Zander, resident, comment that BRT on Route 1 would negatively impact the corridor. He stated that a Light Rail system would be an overall better option than BRT.

I. SUMMARY:

Context Plan

A. *Proposal:*

The application requests an amendment of the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan to designate Route 1 as the corridor for a transit way. The final design, phasing, financing and implementation of any transit service will require continued input from the community, stakeholders and subsequent approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.

The proposed Master Plan amendment will:

- Designate Route 1 as the corridor for transit, rather than Main Street or Potomac Avenue.

- Add the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor project to the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan (MPA#2005-0006)

As previously stated, the final design and implementation of specific transit services in this corridor will require continued input from the community and subsequent approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. The current application simply states that if dedicated transit lanes are to be provided, the lanes should be provided on Route 1, connecting to Potomac Avenue in the vicinity of the Town Center, as was proposed in the *Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor Transit Alternatives Analysis* and further defined as part of the *Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor Interim Transit Improvement Project*.

As with any proposal for major transit services, there are challenges and opportunities, which in this case include:

Opportunities:

- Expanded and improved transit services for residents, workers and visitors in the Potomac Yard and Crystal City areas, and in the City's Del Ray and Northeast neighborhoods;
- Introduction of new transit service concepts (bus rapid transit and/or light rail transit) to meet Alexandria's increasing travel demands.
- Development of a dedicated transit corridor compatible with the requirements of either bus rapid transit or light rail transit; and
- Phased system implementation and service development consistent with projected increases in travel demand within the corridor.

Challenges:

- Providing two dedicated transit lanes while maintaining the "urban boulevard" envisioned by Potomac Yard Design Guidelines;
- Integrating the two additional dedicated lanes and increased paving into an urban and pedestrian friendly street; and
- Maintaining the desired streetscape and landscaping within the Route 1 corridor.

B. *Community Participation:*

This proposal was initially deferred by the Planning Commission at the December 6th hearing in order to provide additional opportunity for community input. On March 2, 2006, a Community Workshop was held by the Ad Hoc Transportation Policy and Program Task Force to review the proposed transitway and discuss alternatives for implementing dedicated transit lanes. Approximately 40 residents, civic association members and interested persons attended this workshop and participated in a lively discussion of this proposal.

Location options for the transit lanes that were discussed at the meeting included:

- Main Street;
- Potomac Avenue;
- Route 1; or
- Route 1 and Main Street.

Workshop participants agreed that there are advantages and disadvantages with each of the options. However, as discussed in more detail below, it was generally agreed that dedicated transit lanes should be located within the Route 1 corridor. The key reasons cited by the group for locating dedicated transit lanes on Route 1 included:

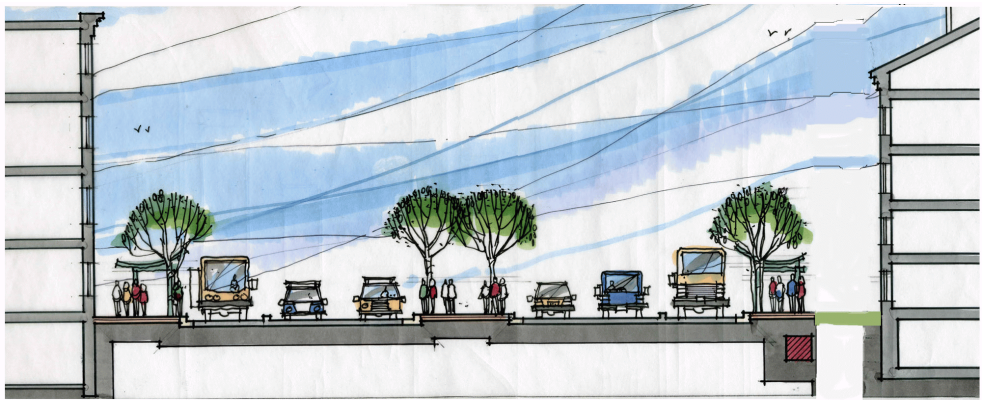
- Better service for both the Del Ray and Potomac Yard communities;
- Higher density land uses are located along Route 1;
- Dedicated transit lanes would not be inconsistent with the character of Route 1, as it would be with other alternatives;
- The width of the right-of-way provides options for the final configuration of the transit lanes.

While location of the transit lanes in the Route 1 corridor was not the unanimous view of the workshop attendees, the overwhelming majority did indicate that they felt that transit should be provided on Route 1. Although the group agreed that dedicated transit lanes should be provided on Route 1, it was much more divided over the question of how these transit lanes should be configured within the street cross-section, with most participants preferring that they be located either adjacent to each curb or within the median area. Staff agrees the alternative configurations have differing positive and negative elements; however, the proposed Master Plan amendment neither designates nor requires either a curbside or median configuration, but rather it establishes that the transit

corridor is to be located along Route 1. The final configuration and design of the transit corridor will be based on continuing input from the community, Planning Commission and City Council.

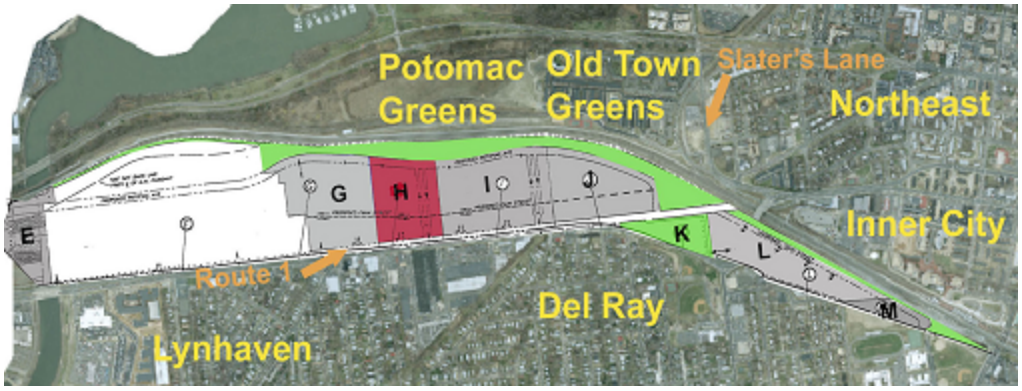
Center Median Option

Curbside Option



C. How do dedicated transit lanes on Route 1 impact the Potomac Yard Development ?

In anticipation of the possibility of a dedicated transit corridor on Route 1, staff has worked with the developer of Potomac Yard and the Planning Commission to increase the Route 1 setback for Landbay H. This additional setback enables the curb to curb distance to increase while also maintaining an area for sidewalks, street trees, building setbacks and landscaping on Route 1. Therefore, the current landbay proposed for development (Landbay H) has been planned in anticipation of future dedicated transit lanes on Route 1.



D. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Master Plan amendment based on the record of clear and convincing findings that high-capacity transit services will be needed to adequately serve travel demand within the Crystal City/Potomac Yard area, and the understanding that final design of any dedicated transit lanes will be subject to additional community review and input and subsequent approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS:

As the Commission and Council are aware, the developer is proceeding with the construction of the framework streets and the Route 1 Bridge for Potomac Yard. The construction, type, size and location of the streets are based on the approved CDD and Design Guidelines. This approach of constructing the street infrastructure first is similar to what was done for the Carlyle development and other developments within the City.

While the construction of these streets as generally depicted in the *Potomac Yard Design Guidelines* would not "preclude" future transit, a condition of approval for Potomac Yard development, future relocation of curbs, utilities and storm sewer lines, and landscaping to accommodate dedicated transit lanes would be at considerable additional expense to the City compared to the cost of implementing these lanes at the present time. Moreover, as Arlington County prepares to begin initial service on portions of the proposed corridor and as occupancy of new development in Alexandria Potomac Yard is anticipated to begin in the near future, timely development of the proposed transit corridor in Alexandria is needed.

As part of the *Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor Alternative Analysis*, it was recommended that the most viable option for providing a high-capacity transit alternative in this corridor in a cost effective and phased manner was to develop bus rapid transit (BRT), rather than a light rail system or a new infill Metrorail station. Initial implementation of BRT service in this corridor does not preclude the possible future conversion to light rail or similar service, nor does it preclude the possibility of constructing an additional Metrorail station.

III. COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

As requested by the Planning Commission, a community workshop was held at George Washington Middle School on March 2, 2006 under sponsorship of the Ad Hoc Transportation Policy and Program Task Force. The purpose of this work was to review the proposed transit corridor and obtain additional community input on several alternatives for implementing dedicated transit lanes. The community was notified of this workshop through multiple outlets, including e-mails to interested individuals and groups, e-mails and fliers distributed to civic associations, and announcements through the City's e-news and on the City's website. Approximately 40 residents, civic association members and interested persons participated in this workshop.

This meeting was the sixth community meeting held in conjunction with development of the Crystal City / Potomac Yard transit corridor project. The first was held in the fall of 1999 as part of the *Crystal City / Potomac Yard Area Transportation Study*. During the follow up *Crystal City/ Potomac Yard Corridor Transit Alternatives Analysis* project, community meetings were held in October 2001 and March 2002. Most recently, as part of the *Crystal City / Potomac Yard Interim Transit Improvement Project*, community workshops were conducted in June and October 2005.

Following a brief overview of the transit corridor project history, staff from the Transportation and Environmental Services, and Planning and Zoning departments reviewed the alternative transit corridor locations (Route 1, Main Street and Potomac Avenue) with participants, discussing factors and considerations leading to Route 1 being the staff-preferred alternative. The four alternative configurations proposed for review and consideration were presented and explained to participants.

These alternative configurations were:

- Alternative 1: Two-way transit lanes located in the central median of Route 1;
- Alternative 2: Two-way transit lanes adjacent to the eastern curb of Route 1;
- Alternative 3: One-way transit lane adjacent to the eastern of Route 1 for northbound service and a one-way transit lane adjacent to the western curb of Route 1 for southbound service; and
- Alternative 4: One-way transit lane adjacent to the eastern curb of Route 1 for northbound service and a one-way transit lane adjacent to the western curb of Main Street for southbound service.

Working in six breakout groups, participants were asked to discuss the alternatives presented, and identify the advantages and disadvantages of each (as well as others they might feel should be considered). The groups were also asked to determine, if possible, the group preference or ranking for each alternative and to provide any additional comments on the transit corridor proposal they feel appropriate. Following their review of the alternatives, groups were invited to report out their findings to other workshop participants.

Not surprisingly, the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives as reported by the six individual groups represented varied specific concerns and sometimes opposing views of the alternatives. Each group's reported advantages and disadvantages were compiled into a single listing, which is attached for detailed review as may be desired. The breakout groups' preferences or rankings of the alternatives (including one group-proposed alternative) are included in the attached workshop summary and are summarized briefly below.

Summary of Group Preferences

	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5[1]
Group A		3	1	1	
Group B	1	3	1		
Group C	2	3	1		
Group D	2		1	2	
Group E	1		3	2	
Group F			3	2	1

[1] Group defined alternative – Transit corridor split on Route 1 and Potomac Avenue

In considering the feedback received during this workshop, staff concludes that:

1. There is strong community support for significant additional transit services such as is being proposed in the Crystal City / Potomac Yard transit corridor.

2. Although not unanimous, there is general community consensus for locating the proposed transit corridor along Route 1 as proposed. Key reasons cited for locating the transit corridor on Route 1 were:
   - Better service for both the Del-Ray and Potomac Yard communities;
   - Higher density land uses are located along Route 1;
   - Dedicated transit lanes would not be inconsistent with the character of Route 1, as it would be with other alternatives;
   - The width of the right-of-way provides options for the final configuration of the transit lanes.
3. However, participants expressed concern that the transit corridor be implemented in such way to maximize accessibility, preserve the boulevard concept for Route 1 and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment for non-transit crossings of Route 1.
4. Participants favor the Alternative 3 configuration with a one-way transit lane adjacent to the eastern of Route 1 for northbound service and a one-way transit lane adjacent to the western curb of Route 1 for southbound service.
5. The Alternative 1 configuration with two-way transit lanes located in the median of Route 1 was the second preference among the alternatives.

Based on this feedback, staff proposes to continue working with the community and Potomac Yard developer to address the outstanding design and implementation issues and the community concerns associated with Alternatives 1 and 3 before recommending a final transit corridor configuration to the Planning Commission and City Council.

IV. NEXT STEPS:

The overall project development process for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard transit corridor is continuing as a cooperative effort among Alexandria, Arlington County and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), with support from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Having completed a transit alternatives analysis for the corridor and an interim transit improvement plan, preparation of the required environmental evaluation has recently been initiated.

Assuming the recommended amendment to the Master Plan is adopted, the next steps to be completed for the transit corridor in Alexandria include:

- Continued work with the community and developer of Potomac Yard to develop a final configuration for the transit corridor. Several outstanding design and implementation issues must be addressed and satisfactorily resolved before a final recommendation can be made on the transit corridor configuration.

- Upon approval of the transit corridor configuration, construction plans will be prepared. It is anticipated that with timely resolution of the corridor configuration question, these plans can be prepared cooperatively with the Potomac Yard development team's plans, development for improvements to northbound Route 1 and approval of development plans for Landbay H.

- Pending completion of the required environmental document and issuance of the record of decision by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), implementation of the transit corridor can commence.

V. AMENDMENT TO THE TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER OF THE MASTER PLAN:

The Master Plan amendment is a request to add the Crystal City/Potomac Yard transit corridor project to the transportation chapter of the City's Master Plan and designate Route 1-Jefferson Davis Highway, rather than Main Street or Potomac Avenue, as the designated location of this corridor. Staff recommends this transit corridor be located consistent with the recommendations of the *Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor Transit Alternatives Analysis* and the *Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor Interim Transit Improvement Project*.

As proposed, this corridor will connect with Route 1 in the vicinity of the Braddock Road Metro Station, continue on Route 1 to the vicinity of East Glebe Road, connect with Potomac Avenue in the town center area, continuing northward to cross Four Mile Run and enter Arlington County. Staff recommends Route 1 as the primary location for this transit corridor in order to maximize its accessibility and potential ridership. Additionally, dedicated transit lanes on Main Street would have significant adverse impact on the character of Main Street, a mixed use street comparable to King Street. Providing transit on Potomac Avenue would negatively impact the adjacent park and essentially eliminate service accessibility for residents of Del Ray.

While staff is recommending language be included as part of the Master Plan to designate Route 1 as a transit corridor, language is also included that requires that the final location, type, design of any future dedicated transit lanes be approved by the Planning Commission and City Council. Any future transit lanes should maintain the character of Route 1 as an urban boulevard with a continual median, trees and street trees.

VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **approval** of insertion of the following text within the Transportation Chapter of the Alexandria Master Plan.

MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

"Route 1-Jefferson Davis Highway shall be designated as a transit corridor. Within the corridor high-capacity transit service connecting Braddock Road Metrorail Station to the Crystal City/Pentagon area may be developed in general conformance with the Crystal City/ Potomac Yard Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis and compatible with the operational requirements of both bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT).

If dedicated transit lanes are to be provided for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor, the lanes shall be provided on Route 1, except that the transit lanes may connect to Potomac Avenue in the vicinity of the Town Center until sufficient right-of-way can be obtained. The final location, type, and design of any future dedicated transit service shall require approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. Any future transit lanes should maintain the character of Route 1 as an urban boulevard with a continual median, trees and street trees.