



City of Alexandria

Transportation Commission

Retreat

November 15, 2013
8:30 a.m.
DASH Board Room

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Councilman Lovain, Kerry Donley, John Komoroske, Jennifer Mitchell, Kevin Posey (via phone), Josh Sawislak and Maria Wasowski

Staff Present: Rich Baier – T&ES, Karen Callahan – T&ES, Joel Marcuson – T&ES, Sandra Marks – T&ES, Marti Reinfeld – T&ES, Steve Sindiong - T&ES, Carrie Beach – P&Z

Others Present: Sherry Schiller, Schiller Center (Facilitator)

The Chair called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 8:30 am.

1. Retreat Purpose

Commissioner Mitchell provided an overview on the purpose of the retreat, including:

- Clarity on the role of the Transportation Commission
- Identify how to improve productivity of meetings
- Identify the project priorities / issues coming to the Commission
- Determine how to foster better public engagement
- Generate enthusiasm for the work of the Commission

2. Role of the Transportation Commission

What is the role of the Commission? The Commission reviewed the role that is included in the ordinance adopted by Council (April 12, 2008), and there was discussion about how the role might be refined to more accurately reflect the role of the Commission:

“The Alexandria Transportation Commission is established to advocate for and promote development of balanced multi-modal transportation systems for the City as well as to provide regular high level development through oversight of the implementation of the Transportation chapter of the adopted Master Plan.”

The key components of the role include “advocate” and “promote”. The Commission should advocate to Council, and promote to the citizens and users. This should be for a balanced network of various modes. It was generally agreed that the City is landlocked, and built out, and that we can’t continue to build roads to alleviate congestion

What are the impacts / results that the Commission would like to see? In terms of implementation, the Commission would like to recommend projects that are needed for funding.

The Commission would also like to see an update to the Transportation Master Plan, which should ideally be updated every five years. The Commission should be the sponsor of the Transportation Master Plan update, in order to engage citizens. It will be important to understand how the update fits with new funding opportunities. The update should make sure to include connectivity to other adjacent jurisdictions; ie, pedestrian and bicycle connections, and understand how transit initiatives, such as Bus Rapid Transit, fits into the regional plan.

At what point in the process with the Commission have the greatest impact? The Commission can have the greatest impact when projects are brought to them early enough so that they can provide recommendations and input, prior to any decision made by Council or other commissions. The Commission would like to provide more input into land use and citywide planning initiatives.

Public hearings are important in terms of getting citizen input, and citizen engagement. It would be better if citizen engagement can be done earlier in the process, and the outcomes or recommendations should be focused on the Transportation Master Plan.

What is needed in terms of staff support, and working with other commissions, committees, and subcommittees? It is important to utilize the time at meetings as efficiently as possible. Many items are currently brought to the Commission as information only, and don’t necessarily need to be presented. Consider having a “Items for Consent” agenda item at the beginning, and include the funding update, regular staff reports, and other items that don’t need to be presented.

3. Citywide Transportation and Planning Initiatives and Commission Input

The following is a summary of the key points that were raised by the Commission for three specific projects that will be addressed by the Commission over the next year, including the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Update, the Eisenhower West Transportation Study, and the Corridor C Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Assessment. In addition, the Commission discussed the overall 2014 Work Plan.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Update: In terms of key issues, it is important to understand where the population growth will occur, in order to know where pedestrian and bicycle improvements are most needed. It is important to provide connectivity with other adjacent jurisdictions, and what is planned in adjacent jurisdictions. Bicyclists should be segregated from pedestrians where feasible. The last mile needs to be a major component – how do we get people to transit? Pedestrian walk sheds are also important.

There should be a facilitated discussion by the Commission to discuss the issues and trade-offs of projects. Staff should provide a recommendation for the Commission to review. There is the potential to have the Commission host an Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Can use Twitter as an outreach tool.

There are three key periods that information should be brought back to the Commission: 1) when data is available; 2) when there are key issues and needs identified; and 3) when projects are recommended.

Eisenhower West Transportation Study: There is a need to understand what the hub/core of the Small Area Plan will be, ie, whether it's Victory Center, or the Van Dorn Metrorail Station. The area might be a good location for big box retail. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is important, as is north-south connectivity.

Potomac Yard Metrorail Station EIS: It is important to understand what the transportation needs are for the broader area. A story needs to be told of the overall transportation issues. In telling the story, it's important to make sure to include the No Build alternative. Provide examples of where the system works better now, even with higher development, than before, such as Carlyle, Clarendon, and the BRAC area.

The Commission should weigh in on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). When the project gets to a LPA, the Commission should start to look for funding.

2014 Work Plan: Reviews for projects should be done as early as possible so that the right feedback is given early enough, and prior to decision making.

In terms of regional projects, staff should work with the regional agencies to build time into their schedule so that information is brought to the Commission early enough for input.

The Commission discussed the possibility of holding a couple of work sessions during 2014, that may be tied to the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Update, and the Eisenhower West Transportation Study. These would be held prior to the regular meeting.

Action / Followup Items: The following action items were summarized, related to the planning initiatives:

- Need to identify Commission assignments (subcommittees / groups)
- Bring back quarterly updates on the schedule
- Brief the Commission on topics in a meaningful way before items brought for action
- Move forward on an update to the Transportation Master Plan
- Work with regional agencies to identify appropriate timing for bringing projects to the Transportation Commission
- Identify topics for work sessions in 2014 and their schedule

4. Commission Updates

No items were discussed.

5. Other Business

The Commission packet included a funding update, an update on the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station, and an update on the King Street bike lane project. There was no additional discussion on these items, as they were discussed earlier under other agenda items.