

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: JOEL MARCUSON, P.E. DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 5 – ROUTE 7 TRANSITWAY STUDY UPDATE

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**ISSUE:** Update of a transit alternatives analysis study being undertaken by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) along Route 7 (King Street) generally from King Street to Tysons Corner.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive this briefing

**DISCUSSION:** On February 16, 2010, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) determined that Falls Church would be awarded \$350,000 of unallocated Section 5339 (Alternatives Analysis) funds to study high capacity transit options in the Route 7 corridor, generally from King Street Metro to Tysons Corner. Since this grant funded a project which spanned jurisdictional boundaries, including Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and the City of Falls Church, it was decided that the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) would administer this project, with a technical committee composed of all affected jurisdictions, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Since a rather small amount of money was available, the study was broken down into two phases. The current Phase 1 described the current and planned corridor, included an economic development study, developed project goals and objectives, screening methodology, and reduced the number of potential alternatives which could be advanced to the next phase of the study. Two public meetings have already been conducted for the project to describe the corridor and indicate some of the options that were eliminated from consideration. Phase 2 will examine the chosen set of alternatives in more detail, assess the environmental impacts of the chosen alternatives, identify the cost of the alternatives, determine the financial feasibility of the chosen alternative, and determine a locally preferred alternative.

Consistent with federal requirements, the study will identify a range of current and visionary high-capacity transit solutions with due regard for related corridor management approaches (operational, transit, bike, pedestrian, TDM, HOV lanes, variable pricing, ITS) that can be implemented to reduce highway and transit congestion and improve overall mobility within the corridor and along major arterial roadways and bus routes within the study area. Specifically,

links to the Mark Center, to high-capacity transit corridors and to the Metrorail Silver Line Dulles extension will be emphasized.

The consultants developed a number of alternative alignments and modes. City staff on the Technical Committee has been clear that all alternatives must be realistic and consistent with the City's Master Transportation Plan. Staff has maintained that the transit corridor has a high level of transit, especially during the peak hours, in Alexandria from the King Street-Old Town Metrorail Station to Mark Center, via the DASH AT2 bus and the WMATA 28X. Further, there is considerable service on King Street from the King Street-Old Town Metrorail Station to Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) via the DASH AT6 bus. Staff has insisted that this level of bus service in the corridor provides excellent service in Alexandria, with no physical infrastructure changes required. Thus, one of the alternatives calls for maintaining this level of service in the corridor, east of Quaker Lane. Another option the consultants will explore is to use the Van Dorn-Beauregard Transitway (also known as Corridor C) to enable those living in that corridor to directly access the attractions along the Route 7 corridor. The consultants have eliminated such options as monorails, commuter rail, heavy rail, and streetcars from further analysis. Interestingly, they are keeping a light rail option available, since their preliminary demand calculations seem to show a potential demand for this service along the Route 7 corridor.

Questions came up regarding how this project would advance beyond Phase 1, since the consultants received a small allocation to complete phase 1. In the spring of 2013, the Virginia General Assembly passed HB2313, which provides funds for regional transportation projects. Funding for Phase 2 of this project is included in the set of regional projects adopted by NVTA in July, 2013. These projects are part of a bond validation suit, to determine if the funding methodology is legal. A final verdict from the court is not expected until February or March, 2014, at the earliest. If the outcome is favorable, the second phase of the project will be able to start shortly thereafter.