

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 2 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. FUNDING UPDATE

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is conducting a study to rate transportation projects, as required by House Bill 599. The results of this study will be used to inform Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's (NVTA) decisions regarding the allocation of "70% funds" for highway projects. Under House Bill 2313, transit capacity projects do not need to be rated to be eligible for these funds. Following several months of outreach to jurisdictions and stakeholders, VDOT presented its final performance measures in late January and issued a call for projects in February. At its February 20 meeting, NVTA decided to submit all highway projects that were generated as part of its FY 2014 – FY 2016 call for projects for the NVTA 70% funds. Alexandria had only submitted one highway project to NVTA (\$500,000 for Real Time Traffic Adaptive Control System), which was forwarded to VDOT along with 31 other highway projects. VDOT reported at the March 13th NVTA meeting that all of the projects submitted by NVTA qualified for the next round of evaluation. The preliminary results are expected in June 2014, with a first draft in October and a final report by the end of the calendar year.

On March 3, 2014, the USDOT issued a Notice of Funding Availability for discretionary funds for National Infrastructure Investments (TIGER). Funds are to be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a region, or a metropolitan area. The FY 2014 Appropriations Act appropriated \$600 million to be awarded for the program, and allows for up to \$35 million to be awarded as planning grants. Projects must demonstrate that all pre-construction activities will be complete to allow grant funding to be obligated by September 30, 2016 and expended by September 30, 2021. Applications are due on April 28, 2014. On April 8, 2014, City staff will seek Council approval to apply for \$25 million in TIGER funds for design and construction of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. Based on the current Potomac Yard Metrorail project schedule, the City anticipates award of a design-build contract by June 2016 and construction completion in Fall 2018, in advance of both statutory deadlines.

B. POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station project is an infill Metrorail station located between the National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations on the Blue and Yellow lines in the vicinity of the Potomac Yard Development.

The project team is working on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which analyzes the socioeconomic, environmental, and transportation impacts of a no build and three build alternatives. The DEIS will address key environmental considerations, including air quality and climate change, transportation and land use, visual resources, parklands, historic and cultural resources, noise, vibration, wetlands and habitats, and temporary construction impacts.

As discussed previously, the project team has been investigating several options to mitigate impacts identified during the DEIS analysis. One of these options involves moving the CSXT tracks to the west, which would potentially allow Alternative B to be removed from National Parks Service (NPS) owned land and the 1999 scenic easement. City staff met with representatives of CSXT on November 13, 2013. The City expects to hear from CSXT by early spring whether CSXT is interested in proceeding further.

While the City awaits a reply from CSXT, staff is revisiting the financial analysis. Staff is also studying other mitigation strategies, such as additional landscaping to screen views of the station from the George Washington Memorial Parkway and a potential design speed modification that would allow the track for Alternative B to be moved out of NPS-owned land. Pending discussions with CSXT and the outcome of the financial analysis currently underway, staff expects to resume work on the DEIS in April and incorporate these mitigation options into the document. Staff anticipates release of the document for public review and comment in Fall 2014.

City Council held a work session on December 10, 2013 and the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG) met on January 6, 2014 to discuss the progress of the DEIS. Based on feedback received at these meetings, City staff has prepared a projected schedule to complete the EIS and for the design-build process. These schedules were presented to City Council at their March 11, 2014 meeting (see Attachments).

For more information on the project, please visit www.alexandriava.gov/potomacyard.

C. CRYSTAL CITY/POTOMAC YARD (ROUTE 1) TRANSITWAY

During the first round of TIGER grants, the City received \$8.5 million to design and construct the Route 1 Transitway between Monroe Avenue and East Glebe Road. The City compiled additional grant funding and \$5.2 million in local funding to design/construct various elements of the Transitway project. The total cost of the Transitway including vehicles is approximately \$20 million.

Transitway construction began in July 2012. Runningway construction is substantially complete. The two major tasks currently underway are landscaping and the fabrication and installation of the Transitway stations. The contractor has been excavating unsuitable material from medians and replacing it with planting material. The installation of plants was

expected to begin the week of March 24. Station foundation excavations were also expected to begin the week of March 24. The project will be complete in Summer 2014.

The branded Metroway service will start with the opening of the Transitway, with buses running every 12 minutes between the Braddock Road Metrorail Station and Pentagon City. The service will operate in mixed traffic through Arlington County until early 2015, when their portion of the transitway is scheduled to open.

For more information on the Route 1 Transitway project please see visit:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/tes/info/default.aspx?id=58644>

D. CORRIDOR C ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In September 2011, City Council adopted the High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group (CWG) recommendation for the Van Dorn/Beauregard Corridor, also known as Corridor C. The recommendation includes transit running mostly in dedicated lanes along Van Dorn and Beauregard Streets from the Van Dorn Metrorail Station to the Mark Center area, where two branches would provide continued service to the Pentagon (one branch would use the I-395 HOV lanes from Seminary Road, while the other would continue on Beauregard / S. Walter Reed Drive to Shirlington before accessing the Pentagon). The City plans to apply for funding for construction of the Transitway through the federal Small Starts process. In order to prepare for entry into the Small Starts process, the City is undertaking an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Assessment (EA).

At the outset of the AA, the project team will focus on defining the Build Alternative. The definition of this alternative will include additional analysis focused on resolving some specific issues related to the project alignment and cross section, including:

- Optimizing service to the Northern Virginia Community College, particularly in light of the recent Campus Master Plan;
- Balancing stop spacing along the corridor to best serve existing and planned development while at the same time keeping the “rapid” in “bus rapid transit;”
- Refining the access to Landmark Mall based on recent development plans; and
- Determining the initial curb-to-curb cross section required to achieve dedicated lanes along Van Dorn Street.

City staff has recently kicked off the AA/EA and is preparing for the initial public and stakeholder engagement in Spring, 2014. As part of the process, City Council approved the Policy Advisory Group on March 11, 2014. The call for nominations for the PAG is expected to go out by Monday, March 31st with the first PAG meeting in early June. The first public meeting will be held at the end of May. Additional public engagement will be structured around the major phases of the project. These include the finalization of alternatives in Fall 2014, the Evaluation of Alternatives in Winter 2015, and the Locally Preferred Alternative and Environmental Assessment Findings in Spring 2015.

E. LOWER KING STREET MULTI-MODAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

In response to the Waterfront Commission recommendation on the Union Street Corridor Study, the City began the Lower King Street Multimodal Feasibility Study in January 2014. The purpose of the study is to analyze and identify impacts associated with various shared street concepts for the 100 block (Union to Lee Streets) of King Street, including limited vehicular access, and improved pedestrian access. The study will identify traffic and circulation improvements, operational and maintenance needs, an implementation timetable and process, and budgetary requirements to convert the 100 block of King Street into a shared street to allow the public to enjoy as a meeting and gathering place, and for dining, shopping, and a range of programmed activities. The study will be coordinated with the other projects in the vicinity including the Unit block of King Street. The estimated duration of the design project is six (6) months for completion. The study will include an analysis of circulation (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle), trolley access, bus (including tour bus) circulation and pick up/drop off, loading access, parking (on-street, garage access, valet, passenger drop off/pick-up areas), and emergency vehicle access.

Civic engagement is a key component of the study. Meetings to date have been held with the Transportation Commission, Waterfront Commission, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group. In March 2014, the project team conducted a walking audit with business representatives of the vicinity of the 100 block of King Street to discuss potential project concepts, and receive input on the concepts and issues. In addition, three focus group meetings were held on March 10, 2014 to discuss potential concepts, and receive input and identify issues important to various stakeholder groups focused on the business community, citizens and City staff. A public meeting was held on March 20, 2014 to provide information to the general public about the project, present concepts, and receive input on issues and needs. The next steps will be the development of concepts and evaluation criteria. Additional civic engagement is anticipated in May 2014 after concepts have been developed and an initial evaluation has been conducted. Additional project information is available at www.alexandriava.gov/76226

F. CAPITAL BIKESHARE

The jurisdictions that own Capital Bikeshare stations - Washington, D.C., Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, and Montgomery County have each contracted with Alta Bicycle Share to operate and maintain the Capital Bikeshare system. Alta Bicycle Share also operates bike share systems in Boston, New York City, Chicago, the Bay Area, Columbus, and Chattanooga. An equipment and technology supplier to Alta Bicycle Share is Public Bike System Company (PBSC). PBSC, located in Montreal, Canada, filed for bankruptcy protection in January 2014.

Alta Bicycle Share has assured the city staff as well as staff from other member jurisdictions that the PBSC filing will not impact current operations of Capital Bikeshare, and that members can expect to receive the same high level of service that they currently receive, but it has led to delays in the shipping of new bike share stations. For equipment that has already been ordered from PBSC, including the City's order for eight stations for expansion of the system to Del Ray and Carlyle, Alta has assured staff that they are working diligently to receive the equipment and install the stations, and that the Alexandria expansion is expected later this spring.