

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 21, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: SANDRA MARKS, ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #4 - LOWER KING STREET MULTIMODAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on the Lower King Street Multimodal Feasibility Study.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the report and provide input to staff.

DISCUSSION:

Background: As part of the Waterfront Commission recommendations on the Union Street Corridor Study, the Waterfront Commission requested that staff study a closure of the 100 block of King Street to cars. As part of its recommendation for the Union Street shared design concept, the Waterfront Commission recommendation to the City Manager (noted in a letter from the Waterfront Commission dated October 15, 2012) included the following: “In the long-term, the Waterfront Commission endorses construction of a shared street, which would raise the road to be flush with the sidewalk, where pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles share a common street space, along Union Street between Cameron Street and Prince Street, and in the unit and 100 blocks of King Street. Implementation of this concept will require further design, which should consider such factors as the optimal allocation of space between users, delivery vehicle access, curb design and transition, traffic calming and right-of-way, materials and curb placement, drainage, and accommodation of special events.”

Project Purpose: In response to the direction from the Waterfront Commission, 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 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.

An early task will be to identify the existing conditions, including a level of service analysis of the fifteen intersections within the study area, and inventory of the existing pedestrian, bicycle, transit, parking, and loading conditions and issues.

Civic Engagement Conducted to Date

Civic engagement is a key component of the study and has included outreach to the business community, resident stakeholder groups, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the Transportation Commission, and Waterfront Commission to date. Future updates will also be given to the Planning Commission, and Traffic and Parking Board. The following project civic engagement tools have been conducted to date.

Walking Audit - Staff and the contractor conducted a Walking Audit with business representatives of the vicinity of the 100 block of King Street on the morning of March 10, 2014. The walking audit allowed for business representative to discuss potential project concepts, and receive input on the concepts and issues.

Focus Groups - Staff and the contractor held three focus group meetings on the afternoon of March 10, 2014 to discuss potential concepts, and receive input and identify issues important to various stakeholder groups. The three focus groups were geared toward key stakeholders including citizen groups, business groups, and City agencies.

Public Meeting – The City held a public meeting on Thursday, March 20, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (City Hall, Sister Cities Room 1101) to provide information to the general public about the project, present concepts, and receive input on issues and needs.

Shared Street Alternatives

Based on input from stakeholders, the project consultant in coordination with the project management team has developed three “functional alternatives” for the 100 block of King Street, including:

- Open Street with wider sidewalks
- Pedestrian only street
- Pedestrian street that still allows for trolleys

All alternatives would still allow for emergency vehicle access, and delivery access. In addition, all of the alternatives could allow for closure during special events, seasonally, or temporarily. These alternatives will be compared against a “No Action” alternative. The existing conditions, stakeholder input, alternatives and evaluation of the alternatives will be presented to the Transportation Commission at its May 21, 2014 meeting for input.

Next Steps

The alternatives will be presented at a public meeting on May 29, 2014 (6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., City Hall, Sister Cities Room) to receive public input on the alternatives.

Additional project information is available at www.alexandriava.gov/76226