



City of Alexandria
Transportation Commission

Regular Meeting

January 15, 2020
7:00 p.m.
Council Workroom

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Vice-Chair Melissa McMahon, Commissioner Bruce Marsh, Commissioner Casey Kane, Commissioner John Goebel, Commissioner Carolyn Schroeder, Commissioner Jakubek, Commissioner Alyia Gaskins.

Staff Present: Yon Lambert – Director, Transportation Environmental Services, Hillary Orr – Deputy Director, Transportation, Christopher Ziemann - Transportation Planning Division Chief, Jennifer Slesinger - Transportation Planning Division, Sharese Thomas - Transportation Planning Division, Jose Ayala – Department of Planning & Zoning.

Audio/Visual¹ presentation is available online:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/TransportationCommission>

Vice-Chair McMahon called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

1. Public Comment Period

Phillip Matyas a property owner on North Lee Street expressed concerns about the safety of the proposed loading zones (in terms of the King Street Place concept) in Fayette Alley and Union Street in addition to the pick-up/drop-off area on Lee Street given the pedestrian fatality that occurred a few years ago on Swift Alley. Mr. Matyas is requesting the Commission to consider making the following safety schematic adjustments to the proposed King Street Place schematic:

- Have a Fairfax drop-off at the western facing lane; making traffic one-way toward the river; blocking the area on South Lee Street and have traffic turn left; and having the lane on the northside of the street become a loading zone, valet, drop-off/pick-up area so that it's a natural process when you drop off on the western part of Fairfax going to King Street.
- Mr. Matyas observed that a backup occurs because of the loading/unloading in Fayette Alley and presents tremendous safety issues. He recommended the following changes in response:
 - Prohibit buses within two blocks of King Street from Duke to Queen Street.

- Have buses turn left onto North Lee Street and drop-off at South Lee Street and King Street.
- Install signage to read “no thru traffic” and “resident access only.” Enforcement would be done through ticketing and towing on the south end of South Lee Street.
- Install signage to read “no thru traffic, for residents only” on Swift Alley as two-way traffic on Lee Street is a safety concern.
- Keep the trolley running during the pilot on the 100 block of King Street to create an urban feel.

2. January Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Kane made a motion and Commissioner Goebel seconded the motion to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carries with Vice-Chair McMahon and Commissioner Gaskins abstaining due to their excused absence.

3. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Kane: The Traffic and Parking Board (T&PB) did not meet in December; the next meeting is January 27.

Commissioner Marsh: The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG) did not meet in December. The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by the Mayor, various City Elected Officials, and Commissioner Kane.

Commissioner Gaskins: The next Alexandria Mobility Plan meeting is on January 22.

Commissioner Jakubek: The Landmark/Van Dorn Planning Committee has not confirmed a meeting date yet.

Vice-Chair McMahon: The Planning Commission meeting was canceled on January 7, due to inclement weather. On behalf of the Transportation and Planning Commission, Vice-Chair McMahon attended the Alexandria City Boards and Commissions training session on January 15. A handout was distributed on retaining records for FOIA purposes pertaining to the work of the Transportation Commission that City staff would not have, for example if someone from the community emails a Commissioner directly. Vice-Chair McMahon recommended that Commissioners keep a copy of the email for record keeping purposes. It was also mentioned in the training session that if three or more Commissioners are discussing any work regarding the Transportation Commission, it is considered a meeting. This includes discussions on email, Skype, or conference calls. Also, there was discussion on options that Boards and Commissions have for establishing an electronic participation policy. While it is not a substitute for in-person meetings, it is a way for a Commissioner who may be temporarily disabled or who had an unforeseen circumstance to participate in no more than two meetings a year electronically. Quorum is still required in the room, only one Commissioner per meeting can participate electrically. Staff confirmed that the Commission currently does not have an electronic participation policy in place. Director Lambert suggested that if the Commission is interested in implementing an electronic participation policy to make it an information agenda item for further discussion at a future Transportation Commission meeting.

4. Public Hearing: King Street Place Endorsement

Staff is proposing a pilot program to convert the 100 block of King Street between Lee Street and Union Street into a temporary pedestrian-only space during the weekends from April until October 2020. The groundwork

for the pedestrian improvements started as part of the Union Street Corridor Study in 2012. The circulation for a pedestrian only space was evaluated as part of the 2015 Lower King Street Multimodal Feasibility Study which involved extensive community outreach. Around the same time, the Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS) working group was formed to make recommendations on parking management. Findings from the 2015 Lower King Street Multimodal Feasibility Study were put on hold until the OTAPS study was completed.

In the summer of 2019, Council requested that this project be added to the FY2020 Interdepartmental Long-Range Work Plan and that staff return with a project plan.

In October 2019, staff presented a timeline and process for implementing a pilot project lasting from April through October 2020 and received more direction from Council. This is a joint project between Planning and Zoning (P&Z), Transportation and Environmental Services, Department of Project Implementation, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, and Visit Alexandria. Staff is seeking Transportation Commission endorsement today. Staff is updating Council in January and is seeking approval of the pilot in February. At the end of the pilot, a report will be provided to City Council with recommendations for a path forward.

Staff has developed a draft design for the block based on input from the business community, safety restrictions, past feasibility studies, and comments from Council and the Waterfront Commission. The proposed design would allow for additional outdoor dining, public space, and a larger pedestrian space. The pilot would remove parking at all times, allowing the outdoor dining furniture to remain and allow two-way vehicular traffic during the week. The recommendation to remove parking at all times is based on business feedback, as well as cost savings from avoiding modifying the street design between weekdays and weekends. Additionally, in response to requests for more public seating, staff is proposing to replace the two unrestricted parking spaces on the unit block of King Street with more options for public seating.

Staff will provide updates to the T&PB and Council in January and receive feedback on the current proposals. Council will be asked to approve the pilot in February. If approved, staff will provide updates to the Special Events Committee and T&PB in March before implementation on April 18.

Commissioner Gaskins asked staff to address the barrier safety concern. Staff is currently working with the Fire and Police Department to address some of the safety designs regarding barriers. The Police Department has requested that staff install solid barriers that bolt in the ground. Staff is also considering using planters and boulders for seating.

Commissioner Kane asked if the only loading zone on Union Street would be before the alley although trucks currently extend all the way down on Union Street. Staff confirmed trucks would pull into the loading zone based on turning analysis. Kane asked about a blanket approach for requests for loading zones and delivery spaces to the T&PB to prevent recurring requests. Staff is considering this. Kane asked if there would be an option to close vehicular traffic during the weekday. Staff's thinking is to build in some flexibility for pilots within the pilot. Staff will test different options over the next couple of months to see what works and how businesses and the community like the different changes.

Commissioner Jakubek asked staff to address the extra public spaces on the unit block and if vehicles will be driving through. Staff stated that few cars will be driving through, but the Trolley must be accommodated.

Commissioner Gaskins asked about other options in terms of flexibility so that the feedback received can be tested and implemented sooner. Staff is taking to Council a pilot with flexibility to test and implement quickly. This includes making changes to parking without requiring separate approvals from the T&PB. Additionally, permits for the restaurants will last the entire duration of the pilot. Gaskins also asked staff whether they can assess what the City is working to achieve, such as health, wellness, and diversity; and how to capture those metrics. Staff is currently considering designing intercept surveys.

Commissioner Marsh asked about questions from business owners about an integrated design with the park at the end of King Street. P&Z is integrating the colors from the water and park to blend in, but it will be handled by the Waterfront Commission. Staff is exploring other alternatives that would highlight the history of Alexandria, such as bringing out the elements of the tracks under the 100 block of King Street.

Vice-Chair McMahan asked for clarification on the pink paint representing the pedestrian zone. Is the pink intended to mean pedestrian zone for pedestrian flow, without counting or discounting the current outdoor seating. The current outdoor dining on the sidewalk will remain. The “swoosh” design addresses concerns of the restaurants at the ends of the block. It also fits nicely where the fire hydrants are located, while keeping pedestrians closer to the retail space.

Vice-Chair McMahan asked follow-up questions regarding Mr. Matyas’ concerns about the pilot. She asked staff to discuss what they are considering and what they might be experimenting with outside of the block. Staff is looking for consistent signage in the north alley for loading zones and reviewing what the City has in other alleys regarding “no through” signs. The benefit of the pilot is having the before data, so staff can observe and take traffic counts in the Spring, to see if there are other modifications they need to make. Also, staff will have the opportunity to evaluate how people are moving throughout Old Town because of the grid.

McMahan asked if staff is considering removing bus circulation from Strand Street. Staff is not considering prohibiting buses because of the quick turnaround. However, staff can monitor and adjust as needed.

Commissioner Kane asked about increasing Police presence in the first few weeks to help mitigate bad behavior. Staff is currently working with Police officer deployment.

Vice-Chair McMahan asked for a motion to endorse the King Street Place pilot and recommend that City Council approve the pilot. Commissioner Jakubek made the motion. Commissioner Gaskins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Action Item: Bus Transformation Project

The Bus Transformation Project (BTP) team is seeking support and buy-in from Commissions, Boards, and/or Councils from all WMATA jurisdictions. As the City’s Transportation Commission has received updates throughout the process, and as many of our peers are seeking endorsement from their comparable Commissions, staff invited the BTP Team to present to the Transportation Commission without the need for City Council action.

The Bus Transformation Project Team has provided the following docket information:

Buses are an integral part of the National Capital Region’s transportation system and carry over 620,000 trips per day over a network that reaches 81 percent of the region’s residents. The region’s nine local bus providers (ART, CUE, DASH, DC Circulator, Fairfax Connector, Metrobus, Loudoun County Transit, Ride On, and TheBus) affordably connect residents to jobs, schools, and other aspects of daily life. However, traffic is increasing, and bus speeds are decreasing, leading to longer travel times and unreliability in getting to a destination. Customer expectations have changed and there is increased competition for fewer passengers. Government budgets are under pressure to do more with less. Bus’s market share is eroding as competition becomes more plentiful and, in some cases, more affordable. The allure of new technology, such as autonomous cars, distracts from the fact that driverless cars and transportation network companies, such as Uber and Lyft, will not solve the region’s mobility problem without defying the laws of physics and geometry. Empirical research points to the likelihood that the new options will make current problems worse.

The BTP Team is requesting that the Transportation Commission provide an endorsement of the Bus Transformation Strategy as released on September 5, 2019. support for the strategy is non-binding.

Commissioner Jakubek stated the need to make the bus more useful. There are currently no dedicated lanes. Dedicated lanes or infrastructure will allow buses to be on time. He also asked about Montgomery County and the planning process for Colesville Road and Route 355. The County is reevaluating Route 355 because of the Governors announcement of Route 270. They are considering dedicated lanes on Route 355. Staff considers it important to promote the BRT on Route 7, Route 1, and in the suburban communities. In addition, suburban communities should advocate for land use and access that will support transit.

Commissioner Gaskins asked about primary convener of the taskforce. Staff stated that this is under discussion because of the push-back. For now it has been tabled. The vision is for representation from the three states, riders, and the business community to include a cross-section that considers everyone's input. She also asked how staff will measure success. The BTP Team is considering tracking all twenty-six recommendations and report annually.

Commissioner Marsh stated that Alexandria does not offer free transfers. Could revenue from new riders to off-set any losses from free transfers? Mr. Miller responded that there would be a net loss despite a ridership gain, but benefits to the region outweigh the cost because of better mobility, travel time and emissions.

Commissioner Kane mentioned bus delays related to traffic and collecting fares. He asked if pre-paid boarding is being considered. Staff would like to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) elements such as all-door boarding, off-board fare payment and mobile fare payment. Kane asked about coordinated schedules across the region to reduce transfer waits. Staff confirmed a goal is identifying opportunities for coordination of transfer times. Kane asked about interoperability of the Transit Priority Signal (TSP), so that all buses would be able to use BRT corridors. The intent in Strategy II: advancing bus priority regionally, is to address this. Currently WMATA has an initiative to expand TSP and with interoperability. Kane asked about TSP locations (besides Beauregard Street and Route 1). Duke Street has multiple TSP locations that both WMATA and DASH use.

Vice-Chair McMahon is concerned the proposed scoring card does not differentiate between the different jurisdictions' progress. Mr. Miller responded that the final report card will have the level of detail that will show accountability by jurisdiction. Ultimately the goal is that residents advocate to impact the decisions on funding. He hopes that with transparency and accountability in the process, there will be momentum to push walking, biking, and transit. The business community strongly supports this regional initiative.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked for a motion to endorse the action plan in the BTP. Commissioner Kane motioned for the Transportation Commission to provide an endorsement of the BTP Strategy as released on September 5, 2019, and encouraged staff and the City to incorporate the BTP Strategy recommendations, where feasible, for planning and funding activities to ensure progress on a transformative region bus network. Commissioner Marsh seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Informational Item: Draft Calendar Year 2020 Work Plan

Every year staff works with the Transportation Commission to develop a work plan to give a broad overview of upcoming items. Staff is requesting input from the Transportation Commission on the DRAFT 2020 Work Plan. The major items in the work plan were developed from last years' plan and major initiatives this year. One major initiative is the electric vehicle charging infrastructure study. There will be some key points for updates on the Mobility Plan. Additional items include the Mount Vernon and Arlandria Small Area Plan; updates on the Complete Streets Program; updates on different WMATA planning efforts including the Blue Orange Silver Line Study; and DC to Richmond High Speed Rail project. It also includes the usual grant funding and budget items. Every other year the Transportation Commission updates the Long-Range Plan which prioritizes projects that come out of other planning efforts. Currently staff is reviewing the Alexandria Mobility Plan which is trying to establish priorities for the next decade. Staff is asking if the Commission wants to continue with the long range planning this year or wait until the Mobility process is completed.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked when the Alexandria Mobility Plan is expected to be complete. The tentative

date is by the end of 2020.

Commissioner Kane stated that the repaving updates on Complete Streets it is a major concern for the T&PB. He asked staff to present the T&PB with the repaving updates before projects begin. Kane is unsure of how or where maintenance for trails should be included in the Commission discussion. Vice-Chair McMahon agreed that the City should consider how it budgets for trail damage. Staff will bring the discussion forward during the next budget priority discussion. Kane suggested the same policy used after a catastrophic event to roads should also apply to trail facilities.

Commissioner Jakubek asked if the City was eligible for FEMA funding for the damage from the rainstorm event in 2019. The City could be eligible for FEMA assistance however the City will have to provide documentation. The City does have trails included in the capital, operating, and maintenance funds. Vice-Chair McMahon stated that the discussion of trails should be included in the Mobility Plan level discussion. Future plans should address the issue of relocating trail facilities that are in unsustainable locations.

Commissioner Gaskins asked if there are going to be decision points related to the Alexandria Mobility Plan (AMP) that also affect the Transportation Commission's work plan and priorities, and how some of those decision points show up on the work plan. Tentatively the updates are for March and June with an action item in November. However, if the Transportation Commission determines something should go for public comment it can be an agenda item. Commissioner Gaskins feels that the Long-Range Plan should be updated this year since there has been discussion not only on creating another plan, but also how those plans are going to be integrated with other plans in progress and ensure alignment.

Given the King Street Place pilot and the pilot-within-a-pilot adjustments, Gaskins requested that staff add another update to the pilot in October or November to process the results. Staff will keep the Commission updated with written items staff will add major items to the agenda. Due to the various initiatives taking place in Mt. Vernon and Arlandria, the Commission will not receive an update until later in the year. Gaskins also asked for the Commission to receive an update earlier. Staff will confirm this.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked about the update to Safe Routes to School initiatives. Staff will provide the Commission an update on everything that was done during 2019. Tentatively staff is looking to provide this update in February.

Commissioner Marsh stated that pedestrians and cyclists' injuries and fatalities nationwide and in the City are increasing. He asked about the six-month time frame to process crash data. The State crash data from 2019 is available in April, so staff will provide an update in June. Vice-Chair McMahon suggested having the Vision Zero Action Plan listed as a discussion item on the agenda instead of a consent item.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked staff to describe the connection between Repaving/Complete Streets updates that are scheduled for March and the Bike Ped implementation update scheduled for April. Staff will update the Commission on the repaving schedule and comments from the Repaving Survey. The Bike-Ped update is the required bi-annual update on accomplishments from the Bike-Ped chapter of the Transportation Master Plan.

7. Action Item: Elections

Commissioner Jakubek nominated Vice-Chair McMahon for Chair. Vice-Chair McMahon accepted. Commissioner Kane seconded the motion. The nomination passed unanimously.

Commissioner Jakubek nominated himself for Vice-Chair and accepted the nomination for Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Schroeder seconded the motion. The nomination passed unanimously.

8. Updates to Receive (Consent Items)

The Commission discussed the following topics from the Consent Items:

A. Dockless Mobility Pilot Update

Commissioner Gaskins asked about communication will flow on the taskforce. The City Council members on the Transportation Commission or their designee are members of the Ad Hoc Taskforce. The members or designees will provide updates during Commission updates.

Commissioner Jakubek asked if the City is monitoring the resources associated with the dockless mobility program and if there is going to be data presented on it. Staff provided City Council with an update on the cost associated with the dockless mobility in December 2019.

Commissioner Kane stated that applications are due next week and wanted to know if staff has received any. Staff did receive some applications and are reviewing them. He also asked if staff has determined where they are going to put the restriction signs. Staff is currently still researching where to put signage.

Commissioner Schroeder asked for clarification on bikes not being allowed on sidewalks and some trails. City Council voted that bikes are not allowed on sidewalks in the City. However, staff is still working out those challenges with bikes not being allowed on some trails.

9. Other business

Several months ago, staff presented to the Commission two grant applications, one for the AT1-Plus and the service enhancements on the AT-9. Staff received funding for the AT1-Plus and service began in October 2019 to coincide with the service of the 395 express lanes. The City received \$3 million for the AT1-Plus and another \$2 million for the AT-9 over the next 20 months. Improvements include substantially increasing frequency on these routes as a precursor to the West End Transitway and the improved all day service sought from the Alexandria Transit Vision. Additional real-time info displays that show when the next bus is arriving will be installed at key AT-1 Plus bus stops in the coming weeks. DASH has added bus wraps celebrating the diversity in the West End. Since receiving the grant, it has been successful in the first month of implementation with November ridership at twenty-six percent higher than November 2018.

Commissioner Kane asked if the bus wraps had already been implemented. Staff confirmed they have been implemented. Also, has staff received any feedback on how the toll lanes are working. Staff has not received any formal feedback on the toll lanes.

Adjournment

At 9:07 pm, The Transportation Commission adjourned.