

Meeting Minutes

To: Jim Maslanka
Steve Sindiong
Organization: City of Alexandria

From: Paul Elman
David Whyte
Erin Murphy
Organization: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Meeting Date: January 20, 2011
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Hilton Alexandria

Subject: Transitway Corridor Feasibility Study High Capacity Transit Corridor Working Group Meeting 3

Attendees: **Corridor Working Group:** Councilman Rob Krupicka (Co-Chair), Councilman Paul Smedberg (Co-Chair), Bill Denton, Donna Fossum, Dak Hardwick, Poul Hertel, Nancy Jennings, John Komoroske
City of Alexandria Council: Councilwoman Del Pepper
City of Alexandria staff: Rich Baier (Director, T&ES), Abi Lerner (Deputy Director, T&ES), Jim Maslanka (T&ES), Steve Sindiong (T&ES), Karen Callaham (T&ES), Jeff Farner (Deputy Director, P&Z)
Kimley-Horn and Associates: Paul Elman, David Whyte, and Erin Murphy
Members of the Public: 30 Citizens signed in

Agenda

1. Introduction – *Chairs, Councilman Krupicka, Councilman Smedberg / Rich Baier, T&ES (3 minutes)*
2. General Updates – *Abi Lerner, T&ES (10 minutes)*
3. Preliminary Land Use Thresholds – *Jeff Farner, P&Z (5 minutes)*
4. Transit Educational Session and Public Input – *David Whyte, Kimley-Horn Associates (15 minutes)*
5. Corridor C Transitway Alignment Alternatives – *David Whyte, Kimley-Horn (70 minutes)*
6. General CWG & Public Comment *(15 minutes)*
7. Logistics and Next Steps – *Abi Lerner, T&ES (2 minutes)*

Summary of Discussion

Updates

- Study being conducted draws on Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and coordinates with other existing plans as well as ongoing projects such as the Beauregard Plan and the Columbia Pike streetcar
- Meeting topic is Corridor C
- Schedule
 - Corridor C is on-schedule
 - Work on other corridors will continue
 - Following the recommendations of this study, Alexandria will need to conduct an environmental study
- Minutes from Corridor Working Group Meeting 2
 - Poul Hertel notes that his comments on streetscape evaluation were related citywide, and not just to Powhatan Street
 - Minutes were approved with noted revisions

Preliminary Land Use Thresholds

- Presentation by Jeff Farner
 - Coordination with Beauregard Work Group and development community
 - Land use numbers represent developer numbers with uses applied by P&Z, refinement is anticipated
 - Land use numbers do not represent existing zoning



- The land use numbers will be used in ridership modeling and are one of many land use inputs for the corridor
- CWG discussion/questions:
 - Donna Fossum – interested in baseline land use numbers
 - Dak Hardwick – Corridor C is not just north of Duke Street, it includes Van Dorn Street corridor with an approved development plan

Transit Educational Session

- Presentation by David Whyte
 - Goals
 - Technical bones related to the alternatives that will be presented for Corridor C
 - Terminology so that everyone is on the same page
 - Key items related to the type of high capacity transit proposed
 - Attract choice riders and serve captive riders well
 - Transit mode characteristics
 - Capital costs/mile
 - Operational characteristics
 - Facilities
- CWG discussion/questions
 - What is the width of streetcar?
 - Response: Typically a streetcar is 8 ½ to 9 feet wide. Typically a bus is 10 ½ feet wide
 - Which of the transit modes will go on Columbia Pike?
 - Response: Columbia Pike still in FTA-planning stage for federal funding
 - Current plans include Skoda streetcar vehicles, embedded rail, modern catenary
 - Current plans do not include dedicated lanes except in a few locations where they are needed for alignment purposes
 - Can there be streetcar without catenary?
 - Response: Studies are on-going with respect to power embedded in the ground and battery power
 - Poul Hertel – A key assumption of the TMP is that to ensure mobility, need a system to move people fast, efficiently, and reliably with transit, need dedicated transit lanes
 - Which modes are not feasible for the corridor?
 - Response: All modes presented (streetcar in mixed traffic, rapid bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), and streetcar in dedicated lanes) are feasible for this corridor
 - On the corridor, grades of 8.5% or less are feasible everywhere. WMATA regulations call for grades of 7.5% or less, whereas manufacturer guidelines are 9% or less

Beauregard/Van Dorn (Corridor C) Transitway Alignment Alternatives

- Presentation by David Whyte
 - Alternatives use the TMP Corridor C alignment as a base
 - Alternatives developed with a "Kit of Parts": regional destinations, internal alignments, modes, station spacing
 - Station locations shown are preliminary and are likely to change based on more detailed evaluation
 - For alternatives shown with dedicated transit lanes, it is assumed that additional lanes will be built for the transit rather than be taken from general purpose. That assumption could be altered
 - With a Corridor C Transitway, existing bus services will be re-worked
- CWG discussion/questions
 - **Alternative A**
 - This is literally an extension of Columbia Pike Streetcar in Arlington



- Alternative A is too expensive
- **Alternative B**
 - How does Alternative B differ from existing bus routes?
 - Response: The transit will be faster as rapid bus mode benefits from traffic signal priority (TSP) and queue jump lanes
 - The transit system will be recognizable with branding and purpose-built stations
 - Will Alternative B have less impact on development because it is more flexible without rail?
 - Response: Yes, but significant spending will occur to make the transit system permanent, for example stations.
 - Rapid bus can be used to build ridership for bus rapid transit and rail transit system implementation at a later time
 - How does the headway figure into costs?
 - Response: Headway is a determinant in operational costs, which is generally less variable by mode than capital costs
 - Headway is also a determinant in the vehicle costs, which is not included in the capital costs shown
 - The operational costs and vehicle costs will be included in the more detailed evaluation
- **Alternative C**
 - Does the terminus or the streetcar at Rayburn Avenue mean the maintenance facility will be located there rather than the proposed location at NVCC?
 - Response: The maintenance facility(ies) does not have to be located at the end of the line
 - The end of the line will be configured with a trail track to switch the vehicle from the southbound to northbound track
 - How much additional cost is attributed to the streetcar?
 - Response: The opinion of probable capital cost for streetcar portion of Alternative C is approximately \$30 million independent of any previous transit improvements in the corridor. If Alternative B (rapid bus) were to be implemented prior to the streetcar in Alternative C, the streetcar portion could be expected to have a capital cost of between \$25 and \$30 million¹.
- **Alternative D**
 - How will the transit get through I-395/Sanger on dedicated lanes?
 - Response: Using creative signal phasing to let the transit move before the general purpose traffic
 - The costs do not include land acquisition?
 - Response: No, they do not. Look at the comparative costs for the options with dedicated lanes.
- **Preliminary Evaluation Summary**
 - Why is Alternative F rated poor for corridor service?
 - Response: Duplicative service with Duke Street Transitway

¹ Opinions of probable cost are shown in year 2010 dollars and do not include additional contingency or escalation to a future year mid-point of construction. Totals listed do not include costs for initial (or programmed replacement) vehicle purchases, maintenance facilities, right-of-way acquisition (including any condemnation, damages, or relocation costs), major utility relocations/new service, or roadway/streetscape improvements that may be implemented concurrently, but are not required for the transit project. Alignments designated as "optional" are not included in the cost.



- Does not provide service to an area designated as Corridor C in the TMP
 - This summary does not weight the evaluation criteria
 - The alternatives presented could be phased
 - There may be an opportunity to get Fairfax County involved and assist in paying for alternatives like B and F
- CWG preferences/dislikes of specific alternatives
 - **Bill Denton**
 - Likes Alternatives F and D
 - **Poul Hertel**
 - Likes Alternatives D and F and would like to see Alternative B more fully flushed out/evaluated
 - **Dak Hardwick**
 - Eliminate Alternatives A and G
 - Do not like Alternative F because it does not serve Alexandria residents
 - Reservation about what you get for your money by extending streetcar service to Beauregard Town Center
 - Appreciate 1/2 –mile station spacing with the goal of keeping people moving
 - Regional connectivity to Shirlington and Pentagon important as more people are moving through the 395/Van Dorn/Beauregard corridor
 - Prefer Alternatives C, D, and E
 - **John Komoroske**
 - Looking at the bottom line and the ability to build the transitway
 - Development or riders may not come
 - Start with the \$15 million alternative (Alternative B) and move up
 - All alignments seem fine except Alternative F
 - Prefer Alternative B, then move up to another alternative in the range of Alternatives C through E
 - **Donna Fossum**
 - Thinks Alternative G is dead-on-arrival
 - Reject Alternatives A and G, Alexandria has different needs than Arlington
 - Need fabulous stations to attract riders
 - Need to be able to grow into the service
 - Have to consider connection to the Pentagon
 - Can dispense with the streetcar duplication
 - In favor of what can be operational quickly
 - Down the line with more money, more extensive transitway could be built
 - Prefer Alternatives B, C, D, and E, in that order
 - **Nancy Jennings**
 - Does not understand what the transitway will do – who will use the service
 - In 30 years, it does not make sense to go to Shirlington and the Pentagon
 - Want to add the rims to the existing regional transit network rather than additional spokes
 - Need transit service to Routes 7 and 236
 - Gridlock exists now and the proposed alternatives do not solve the problem
 - Response: In addition to the high-capacity surface transit envisioned by Alexandria and Arlington, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (WashCOG) is studying and envisioning a region-wide system of surface transit which will serve additional corridors and provide service to more trip-ends
 - Aren't the existing Metrobuses already getting you downtown?
 - Response: Yes, but the envisioned Transitway could provide a 1-seat ride, will be faster with features such as TSP, queue jump lanes, and/or dedicated transit



lanes, and will feel more permanent and have more amenities than a bus in hopes of attracting additional riders

- If the transit goes through new redevelopments, could get dedicated lanes without effecting exiting traffic
- Prefers Alternative B

o **Councilman Paul Smedberg**

- Connect to the Pentagon and Shirlington, major transit centers
- Interested in flushing out Alternative B further
- Eliminate Alternatives A and F, the streetcar-only alternatives
- Want to have capability to tie-into the regional system of streetcars in the future
- Prefer Alternatives D and E

o **Corridor Work Group – Preference of Alternatives**

| CWG Member | Alt A | Alt B | Alt C | Alt D | Alt E | Alt F | Alt G |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Paul Smedberg | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Bill Denton | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Donna Fossum | | ✓ (1) | ✓ (2) | ✓ (3) | ✓ (4) | | |
| Nancy Jennings | | ✓ | | | | | |
| Dak Hardwick | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| John Komoroske | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Poul Hertel | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| TOTAL | 0 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 |

o **Poul Hertel**

- The cost numbers for streetcars do not make sense
- East-west connectivity is a problem

o **Nancy Jennings**

- Streetcars are used for downtown areas to revitalize them
- On Beauregard, nothing is being revitalized
- Do not even know if the Beauregard area is retail-viable

o **John Komoroske**

- Need to take pieces of all the alternatives that we like

• **Public Comment** on Alternative Alignments

- o Do not get the look/feel of how the system works for riders – how people will get on and off, how people change seats, the number of fares, what it looks like
 - Response: Those details will be coming as the screened alternatives are refined
 - Example of how it will feel – you will walk up to a purpose-built station with real time passenger information that tells you when the next vehicle will arrive, when you board passenger information will also be available on the vehicle telling you what the next stop is, the intersection station and how long you may wait if you transfer
- o Concerns regarding streetcar
 - Is the City planning to buy out JBG, the transit will not fit
 - People in the West End with money will continue to drive
 - The City is pushing transit without money to build it, need more transparency
 - o Response: the City is studying the opportunities to offer multimodal transportation in the West End
 - o The study will give Council and staff feedback from the CWG and the public
 - o The City is looking at federal grant money as potential funding options
 - o Additional study is needed to be eligible for FTA or New Starts programs
 - o Another funding option is a transportation tax



- Opposed to a streetcar, start out with something small
- **Chair of the Transportation Commission**
 - Want a system that will work to move people quickly and efficiently
 - Alexandria will get what it pays for
 - Bus is the mode of the last resort in the region
 - Bus will not attract streetcar riders that have to transfer
 - There is not one travel guide that has a bus route included in it
- Routes that use HOV could only go one-way during any given time of day
- Has anyone looked into where people want to go?
- Department of Defense (DOD) people will want to go to the Pentagon
- Will TSP make the traffic in the corridor unhappy?
 - Response: No. TSP works within defined acceptable ranges of disturbance to normal signal timings so that vehicular progression and service is largely maintained.
 - There is a side benefit in that the system can be configured to also serve emergency response
- Has the CWG asked for a Metrorail extension along 395 to Shirlington and Mark Center using HOV lane?
 - Response: No, the regional governments are not considering Metrorail extension
 - Metrorail is cost-prohibitive
 - The HOV lanes are the most successful in the nation and VDOT would not be interested in changing their use
- Like the idea of modernizing buses to make them more attractive to riders
- Having a long-term strategy to attract riders is a key to success
- There are many more options than what was presented
- There are many more options needed than just the Beauregard/Van Dorn corridor, east-west traffic on Seminary is not well-addressed in the options
- The options stopping streetcar at the Beauregard Town Center are better than continuing to Van Dorn because of the environmental constraints
- There has to be something in the Transitway for the residents
- Residents shop at Landmark Plaza, Skyline, Shopper's Food – make the Transitway attractive to them
- Important to have connectivity with other jurisdictions
- Should not be so parochial as to dismiss serving Fairfax County – there are many Fairfax County drivers in Alexandria
- Any system that does not have dedicated lanes is not worth spending money on, in the long-term it is not cost-effective
- Preliminary screening evaluation is misleading because there are no operational costs (which are higher for buses than streetcar), no consideration of land use impacts (transit induces walkable community development that does not happen with buses and development can help pay for rail), and no ridership evaluation (rail attracts more riders)
- To build ridership and ensure success consider parking facilities
 - The circles shown indicate that the Transitway is only attracting walkable riders
 - Parking facilities would induce riders from further distances
- Prefer options that do not affect traffic flow as BRAC will only make traffic worse
- Like Option E – could be helpful to attract BRAC riders to the Van Dorn Metrorail station rather than the King Street Metrorail station
- First concern is BRAC – spend DOD money on short- and mid-term improvements and spend Alexandria money on transit
- Too soon to make a decision with the rough screening, need to include operational costs and acquisition plan
- Evaluation criteria is not evenly weighted



- Transit connectivity is important – make ours the same as other jurisdictions
- Service to population, retail, and jobs in the corridor is important
- Where are the people going? Need an origin-destination study for existing and future so as not to dismiss screening options without ridership projections, look at cost per rider
- All options will require reconstruction – do not leave out other modes (pedestrians, bicycles)
- Bike lanes and cycle tracks are important for the corridor, with bike shed could cover one mile in 10 minutes
- Do not drop streetcar options without ridership projections
- Can Alternative E become Alternative G?
 - Response: Yes, with phasing
- Regarding the psychology of use, can you rank the alternatives by attractiveness for riders?
 - Response: Other countries have accepted bus transit
 - In the U.S., BRT systems have exceeded ridership projections country-wide
- Is there any difference in the environmental impacts?
 - Response: Any system will result in less pollution than traffic or regular bus service
- Look at the ultimate objective of dedicated lanes, but plan for today's nightmare with BRAC
- Need connectivity with Arlington and Fairfax, to what extent has Alexandria already coordinated?
 - Response: City is coordinating actively and continuously with the Columbia Pike project
- Funding is a major issue
- Need to take a multi-phased approach
 - Quick implementation with available funding
 - Not adequate for long-term
 - Long-term solution is some type of hybrid
- Need coordination with BRAC in the short- and mid-term, but cannot exclude the long-term
- There is currently a House of Representatives bill to fund part of the short-term roadway improvements related to BRAC and additional money to study environmental impacts of long-term improvements

Conclusions

- Project team will take alignment comments into account
- The TMP Transitway corridors respond to citywide and regional development pressures
- City is looking for long-term non-auto solutions, how to get people in and through the City on alternative modes
- The Beauregard land use planning/developer plan includes a multimodal Beauregard with dedicated transit lanes
- Comment: Poul Hertel – the transportation commission spent five years developing the high-capacity transit corridors, travel time on transit and connectivity are important to get people out of their cars

Logistics and Next Steps

- The next meeting will be Thursday, March 17, 2011. The standing meeting is the third Thursday of each month at 7:00pm.
- Comment cards were available on the table and on the project website – 10-day comment period