

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 3, 2012

TO: PAUL SMEDBERG, CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT CORRIDOR WORK GROUP; AND KEVIN POSEY, CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: RICHARD BAIER, P.E., LEED AP., DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #2 - PUBLIC HEARING AND CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

ISSUE: Consideration of the proposed Transportation Master Plan amendments related to the recommendations of the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the following:

1. That the High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group and Transportation Commission receive a staff update on the proposed amendments to the Transportation Master Plan, related to the approved Transitway recommendations for Corridors A, B and C, and hold a Public Hearing;
2. That the High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group and Transportation Commission, following the Public Hearing, provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission to approve the proposed amendments to the Transportation Master Plan, related to the Transitway recommendations for Corridors A, B and C.

DISCUSSION: The City's 2008 Transportation Master Plan, and the City Council's 2010 Strategic Plan identify high capacity transitways within the City as high priority projects. The Transportation Master Plan identifies a network of High Capacity Transitways in three of Alexandria's most important travel corridors. These transitways will allow frequent and reliable transit service to existing and future development areas and to local and regional transit hubs. These transitways (which represent the corridors served and not necessarily the actual transitway alignment) include:

- Corridor A: Route 1 / North-South
- Corridor B: Duke Street / Eisenhower Avenue
- Corridor C: Van Dorn / Beauregard

The transitways are part of a larger regional system of high capacity transit between major activity centers, transit facilities, high density mixed use areas and employment centers. All three

of the transitways being planned for in Alexandria provide connectivity to major activity areas within Alexandria, and connectivity to regional destinations such as the Pentagon, Shirlington, and Fairfax County.

Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study

In 2010, the City began the Transitways Corridor Feasibility Study to analyze the feasibility and implementation of the three transitways. The primary goals of the study were to develop concepts and identify a mode technology for each corridor, identify a specific alignment for each corridor, review the financial feasibility and develop planning level cost estimates for the preferred operation for each corridor, and identify implementation actions needed for each corridor.

The High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group (CWG) was created to provide input to such issues as route alignments, cross-sections, methods of operation, type of vehicles, land use considerations, ridership, and financial implications. The CWG held a total of 14 public meetings throughout the course of the project. An opportunity for public comment was provided at all meetings, and staff received public comments through other efforts as well, including via the project webpage, e-mails and letters.

Corridor A – Route 1 / North-South: The focus of analysis for Corridor A was to enhance local mobility and connectivity within Old Town and existing Metrorail stations at Braddock Road and King Street. At their December 15, 2012 meeting, the CWG recommended that no dedicated transitway be constructed on Corridor A south of Braddock Road Metrorail station, and that in the near term, the City examine a potential circulator route within Old Town.

At its May 2, 2012 meeting, the Transportation Commission stated that the analysis of a circulator within Old Town be sensitive to the residents' concerns and historic infrastructure. Furthermore, the Transportation Commission encouraged additional analysis for east-west connectivity between Corridor B, the Huntington Metrorail station and Maryland via the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and that community outreach be conducted as part of the analysis, and that findings be presented to the Transportation Commission and City Council.

At its June 5, 2012 meeting, the Planning Commission concurred with the CWG and the Transportation Commission recommendations. In response to comments made by residents during the Public Hearing, the Planning Commission instructed staff to review the process that would need to be followed to remove the section of Corridor A south of Braddock Road Metro from the Transportation Master Plan. The City Council held a public hearing related to the recommendation for Corridor A on June 13, 2012. Following the public hearing, the Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation, and directed staff to come back with proposed amendments to the Transportation Master Plan.

Corridor B – Duke Street / Eisenhower Avenue: Early in the planning process, Duke Street (rather than Eisenhower Avenue) was selected by the CWG as the preferred alignment for a dedicated transitway, based upon an evaluation of preliminary screening criteria, feedback from the CWG, and public input. At the same time, it was recommended that existing transit service along Eisenhower Avenue be improved through additional transit service and improved passenger amenities. At its March 15, 2012 meeting, the CWG recommended initiating Bus Rapid Transit along Duke Street through the implementation of Alternative 1a (a combination of

dedicated curbside transit lanes in existing six-lane sections, and shared curbside lanes in four lane sections). Following implementation of Alternative 1a, the City should proceed with implementation of Alternative 3c (dedicated curbside transit lanes in existing six-lane sections, and a reversible lane between Jordan Street and Roth Street), and continue to examine a bicycle facility along Duke Street.

At its May 2, 2012 meeting, the Transportation Commission concurred with the recommendation made by the CWG. At its June 2, 2012 meeting, the Planning Commission concurred with both the CWG and the Transportation Commission. In addition, the Planning Commission recommended that the Corridor B improvements (related to Alternative 3c) have minimal impacts to businesses and homeowners along Duke Street, and noted that a bicycle facility along Duke Street be accommodated only if studies demonstrate that the streetscape can still be enhanced.

The City Council held a public hearing related to the recommendation for Corridor B on June 13, 2012. Following the public hearing, the Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation.

Corridor C – Van Dorn / Beauregard: A recommendation for Corridor C was made by the CWG at its May 17, 2011 meeting. The recommendation was for the implementation Alternative D (Bus Rapid Transit in dedicated lanes between Van Dorn Metrorail Station and the Pentagon), until such time that Alternative G (Streetcar in dedicated lanes between Van Dorn Metrorail Station and the Pentagon) becomes feasible. The Transportation Commission and Planning Commissions each held a public hearing and provided recommendations for Corridor C.

The City Council held a public hearing on September 17, 2011, and following the public hearing, approved the CWG recommendation, with a caveat that the Corridor C transitway provide an improved connection to the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC).

Proposed Amendments to the Transportation Master Plan

The general alignments of Corridors A, B and C were approved as part of the 2008 adopted Transportation Master Plan and are a Citywide transportation facility with Citywide transportation and land use implications, that are also coordinated with the regional planned transportation and transit system.

Since the completion of the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study, and the recommendations by the Council for all three corridors, staff was requested to bring forward proposed amendments to the Transportation Master Plan to reflect the adopted recommendations by the City Council.

The specific language that is proposed to be added to the Transportation Master Plan for each corridor is provided below.

Corridor A – Route 1 / North-South Recommendation: There shall not be a dedicated-lane for high capacity transit on the portion of Corridor A south of the Braddock Metrorail Station. Instead, resources should be used to explore the possibility of putting circulator buses/trolleys or other forms of conventional and scale appropriate transit in this portion of the City. East-west connections between Old Town and the existing Metrorail stations is the most effective way to encourage transit use in this area. These connections should be done with maximum sensitivity

to the residents' concerns and the historic infrastructure in Old Town, and community outreach should be undertaken before any action to implement is taken.

Corridor B – Duke Street / Eisenhower Avenue Recommendation: Alternative 1a (in the Transitways Corridor Feasibility Study) should be the first phase of transitway implementation on Duke Street. It would create dedicated curbside transit lanes in existing six-lane sections of Duke Street between Landmark Mall and Jordan Street and between Roth Street and Diagonal Road. In the remaining section of Duke Street between Jordan Street and Roth Street, transit would operate in mixed flow in the curb lanes. A parallel off-corridor bicycle facility should be examined to accommodate bicyclists along Duke Street and improved pedestrian facilities would be provided at intersections and near transit stations. Preliminary implementation should prioritize enhanced pedestrian safety and improvements at Taylor Run Parkway.

Alternative 3c (in the Transitways Corridor Feasibility Study) would be the subsequent phase of transitway implementation on Duke Street. It would build on Alternative 1a by widening Duke Street to provide a reversible lane between Jordan Street and Roth Street. The reversible lane would be configured to allow Duke Street to accommodate a dedicated curbside transit lane in the peak hour and peak direction of traffic flow during the a.m. and p.m. peak periods along Duke Street (while still providing two general purpose lanes for peak directions). Alternative 3c should continue to examine a bicycle facility along Duke Street along with corridor-wide pedestrian improvements. However, bicycles should be accommodated in this corridor only if studies demonstrate that the streetscape can still be enhanced.

Corridor C – Van Dorn / Beauregard Recommendation: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Dedicated lanes between the Van Dorn Metrorail Station and the Pentagon via Shirlington (Alternative D in the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study) is the preferred alternative for phased implementation of transit in dedicated lanes in Corridor C until such time that Streetcar (Alternative G in the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study) may become feasible and can be implemented. The Alternative D alignment should be optimized to better serve the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). This course of action is consistent with the Council's recent decision to provide dedicated lane transit along the segment of Corridor A that is north of Braddock Road. Evaluation and analysis will continue of Alternative D in preparation for future implementation of Alternative G. Construction of transit in Corridor C shall be the first priority of Alexandria's transportation projects. Each subsequent corridor shall be evaluated separately regarding the need to acquire additional right-of-way.

Next Steps

Upon review and approval of the proposed amendments by the CWG and Transportation Commission, the Planning Commission will review and approve the proposed amendments at its November 6, 2012 meeting, prior to being forwarded to Council for approval. More detailed changes to the Transit section of the Transportation Master Plan will be conducted at a later date, as part of a comprehensive update / amendment to the Transportation Master Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 - Corridor A Recommendations
- Attachment 2 - Corridor B Recommendations
- Attachment 3 - Corridor C Recommendations