

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JULY 10, 2013
TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
FROM: T&ES STAFF
SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 5 - STAFF UPDATES

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the staff update.

A. POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

The Potomac Yard Metro 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 development of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project is currently underway. The project team is advancing the socioeconomic, environmental, and transportation impact assessments for the no build and three build alternatives. When complete, the DEIS will comprehensively assess the environmental effects of the build alternatives and the no-build alternative, and 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.

A Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group (PYMIG) meeting was held on June 10, 2013. The focus of that meeting was to update the group and citizens on the process to date, review the impacts from the DEIS, and discuss the community outreach process that will occur between the release of the Draft EIS and the City Council determining the preferred alternative.

Under the initial schedule for the project, the DEIS was to be released on May 3, followed by several Community Education and Discussion Workshops and a public hearing scheduled for the last week in June. However, during the preliminary agency review, several technical changes and amendments were recommended, which the project team is incorporating into the draft. With this additional work, it became clear the original schedule could not be met and public engagement would have occurred during the summer, which would have resulted in less opportunity for community input.

To encourage public participation, the City requested, and the cooperating agencies agreed,

to modify the schedule so the DEIS will be released in the fall, followed by additional public outreach meetings and a public hearing. The Alexandria City Council likely will consider the selection of a preferred alternative in late fall 2013. This shift in the schedule will enable maximum civic engagement by holding the community meetings and the DEIS hearing when the community and stakeholders in this process are able to be fully present to participate. The shift will also allow the City and cooperating agencies more time to discuss the impacts of the alternatives.

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

B. DASH COMPREHENSIVE OPERATIONS ANALYSIS

The City and Alexandria Transit Company (ATC) recently initiated an update to the DASH COA. ATC is a non-profit public service corporation, wholly-owned by the City of Alexandria. The last complete COA of the DASH bus system was conducted in 2005 with additional onboard data collected in 2008. Transportation Management and Design, Inc. (TMD) was hired to conduct the update to the COA, and initiated the project in October, 2012.

Study Purpose

The study will include an evaluation of all existing data and studies that have been completed, collect a complete set of new data based on current service, and develop short and long range recommendations to improve and expand service in the future. The long range recommendations shall take into consideration the future implementation of each of the City's Transitways. The goal of this project is to develop and prioritize short and long range solutions to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the ATC fixed route transit system that would address the following issues:

1. Improve service frequency to meet urban transit standards
2. Improve travel times
3. Improve schedule adherence
4. Improve connectivity
5. Improve productivity
6. Identify latent demand
7. Identify underserved areas
8. Reduce overcrowding
9. Identify underutilized service
10. Incorporate and utilize future high capacity Transitways

Public Outreach

An early project component is to conduct stakeholder outreach as well as collect information from riders and non-riders. The consultant team conducted interviews in March/April 2013 with key stakeholders to give an overview of the project, and get feedback on DASH's role within the community and region, and the service and network priorities. The stakeholders included the Alexandria Transit Board of Directors, members of various City commissions including the Environmental Policy Commission, Transportation Commission, Commission on Persons with Disabilities, and Commission on Aging, ATC staff and drivers, Alexandria Community Public Schools (ACPS), business representatives, Inova Hospital and City staff.

In addition to the stakeholder input, TMD conducted on-board rider surveys and a telephone survey in Spring, 2013. The rider survey will be used to obtain demographic characteristics, origin and destination information, other key travel behavior data and satisfaction of current riders. The telephone survey will be used to collect statistically valid information from DASH users and non-users in order to aid the future growth of DASH.

During the Summer of 2013, the City and DASH will be conducting a broader online survey to introduce the project to the general public and get input on priorities for DASH service and expansion. The survey will include questions similar to those used for the stakeholder interviews and telephone survey. The first public meeting/open houses will be held on September 11 and 12, 2013 to provide an overview of the project, results of the stakeholder and survey input, and receive initial input on key issues and needs. One open house will be held on the West End of Alexandria (Landmark Mall), and another in Old Town (Durant Center). In addition, information on the project will be provided at an on-site location, such as a metrorail station during the same time period.

Next Steps

The consultant team is collecting and reviewing existing data (such as ridership, fleet size etc.), conducting a system-wide ridership count, and conducting a service evaluation based on the data. A market analysis will be conducted to determine the transit demand for the region based on market segmentation, travel patterns and transit competitiveness. In September, staff will provide an update to the Commission on the results of the public outreach process.

Recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing programs and services will be made, with short and long term timeframes. These may include proposed route alignments, service frequencies and spans, and vehicle requirements. The project is anticipated to be complete by early 2014.