

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** OCTOBER 21, 2015

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** SANDRA MARKS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** AGENDA ITEM #4 – EISENHOWER WEST SMALL AREA PLAN

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**ISSUE:** Update on the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Transportation Commission receive an update on the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan (Plan), hold a public hearing, review the Plan for consistency with the Transportation Master Plan, and endorse the Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** In 2013, City Council directed staff to begin a planning effort for the Eisenhower West area of the City. Council established a Steering Committee to assist in developing plan principles for the plan area regarding potential land uses, open space, sustainability, transportation and connectivity, potential community benefits, and other topics.

The Eisenhower West Small Area Plan (“Plan”) establishes a long-term (25 year) vision and development framework for the planning area. It addresses future land use, transportation and connectivity, parks and open space, building character, environmental sustainability, and implementation next steps. The Plan is intended to guide public and private investment in the plan area. Plan strategies build on existing assets of the area including the Van Dorn Metrorail Station, access to Interstate 495, Ben Brenman Park, and the mix of land uses. In addition to establishing a needed framework for connectivity and development, the Plan also identifies a series of next steps for recommended implementation strategies.

This Plan serves to provide an overarching vision for Eisenhower West with supporting guidelines and recommendations. It was developed through an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process guided by *What’s Next Alexandria* and supported by planning-level analyses of major elements including urban design, land use, transportation, parks and open space, energy, environment, and market economics. Economic development and corresponding

implementation strategies were of particular focus in order to capitalize on the area's proximity to Metrorail and the Beltway, and to be responsive to changing conditions in the plan area.

**DISCUSSION:** In conjunction with the planning process, a transportation study was completed that examines the impacts of the proposed plan on the transportation network. One of the key principles of the Plan is to ensure a multi-modal transportation system with multiple, attractive transportation options. To that end, staff conducted a transportation analysis that considered community concerns shared early in the planning process, such as bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, traffic issues at Route 1 and Glebe Road, and traffic calming.

The Plan is consistent with the goals included within the City's Transportation Management Plan (2008), the City's Complete Streets policy (2011), as well as recommendations from the 2009 Landmark / Van Dorn Corridor Plan (a portion of which is within the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan). It accommodates a multi-modal transportation system by establishing a transportation framework consistent with the Complete Streets Policy (adopted in 2011) that prioritizes pedestrians, bikes, and transit. It incorporates the West End Transitway, and expands upon recommendations in the DASH Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA), completed in 2014. The plan was also coordinated with the ongoing Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan update, and includes a comprehensive network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities (trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and bikeshare stations), and improves pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within the plan area to adjacent neighborhoods. The Plan improves overall vehicular mobility by creating a more connected and urban roadway network, designed in a grid layout to provide better circulation and connectivity for all modes of travel. It includes additional north-south connectivity through new roadways (Multimodal bridge, Farrington Avenue Connector), and additional non-motorized connections across Backlick Run and the Norfolk Southern rail line. It also improves a number of intersections to accommodate vehicular traffic that are proposed as mitigation. The Plan recommends a comprehensive transportation strategy that makes improvements to all of the transportation systems.

One of the key concepts of the Plan is to create an urban mixed-use environment that reduces dependency on the automobile and prioritizes walking, biking, and transit use. To achieve this end, the Plan takes advantage of the Van Dorn Metrorail station and multiple, attractive existing and future multi-modal transportation options. While traffic in the Plan area will continue to increase over time, resulting in a larger number of failing intersections than under the 2040 Baseline scenario, the Plan-recommended improvements also result in better connectivity and more transportation options as well as improved access to the Van Dorn Metrorail station. Subsequent CDD zoning will require phasing of infrastructure with development to ensure that the improvements are timed to coordinate with development. This approach is similar to other recent plans such as North Potomac Yard and Beauregard.

## **Multimodal Bridge**

The plan envisions a multimodal bridge to connect the Van Dorn Metrorail Station to South Pickett Street, as initially recommended in the Landmark Van Dorn Corridor Plan (2009). The bridge will serve as a future connection for the West End Transitway, providing dedicated transit lanes between the station and South Pickett Street, and connecting buses to South Van Dorn Street. In addition, the bridge will include ample width for pedestrians and bicycles, improving multimodal connectivity between the station and existing and future development areas to the north.

During the Small Area Planning process, a number of alignment options for the bridge were identified and evaluated to help inform the decision on the preferred alignment for the multimodal bridge. Outreach was conducted with all of the affected property owners, including the Norfolk Southern railroad. During this outreach process, the City learned that the bridge alignment options could affect the railroad's long term plan for expanding its Thoroughbred Bulk Transfer (TBT) facility. The City will continue to work with Norfolk Southern, and additional detailed engineering will be conducted during the proposed implementation planning phase to help determine a preferred bridge alignment. The Eisenhower West Small Area Plan does not identify a specific preferred alignment, and all alignment options and other potential solutions are still open for discussion and additional analysis.

## **Transportation Analysis**

As part of the effort to review the feasibility of the proposed Plan, staff conducted a transportation analysis that considered:

- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
- Access to existing and future transit
- Existing and increasing levels of traffic and cut-through traffic in adjoining neighborhoods
- Additional north-south connectivity across the Norfolk Southern railroad

The transportation analysis is a planning-level study that evaluates the impacts associated with the Plan. The transportation study limits were larger than the boundary of the Plan area in order to be consistent with the boundary that was defined in the Clermont Avenue Interchange with I-95 Environmental Assessment, completed in 1993. The analysis examined fourteen existing intersections within the Small Area Plan boundary, and an additional 36 existing intersections within the full transportation study boundary, but outside the Plan area. Additional intersections created by new roadways under the Plan (Build) scenarios were also analyzed. The study assumes full build-out of the Plan area by the year 2040 and assumes changes in regional traffic patterns over that period. The analysis also assumes increases in traffic attributed to regional growth including approved development in the Plan area by 2040.

It should be noted that all future redevelopment applications associated with the Plan will require additional traffic studies to analyze specific impacts based on the development plans for each site, and will include new transportation data and development information available at that time. The future studies will update the traffic impacts associated with specific development and refine the recommended improvements to the transportation plan.

The 2040 Baseline scenario assumes a number of planned transportation improvements that are included in the City's Transportation Master Plan, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), City's Transportation Long Range Plan, and the regional Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP), such as the Multi-modal bridge, the Farrington Avenue connector, the future High Street, the City's three transitways including the West End Transitway, and improved DASH service including a new Van Dorn circulator. A 2040 Build scenario was conducted with, and without the Multimodal bridge to determine impacts if the bridge cannot ultimately be constructed, and included additional improvements, such as a new street grid developed as part of the plan. The West End Transitway is planned to use the future Multimodal Bridge when completed. For the scenario without the bridge, it was assumed that Van Dorn Street would need to be widened between S. Pickett Street and Eisenhower Avenue to accommodate the West End Transitway, as well as improved non-motorized facilities.

Based on the results of the 2040 Build scenario analysis, mitigation measures were identified to improve traffic operations, and the two scenarios were then tested with the mitigation. The mitigation measures were primarily intersection improvements, especially at Van Dorn Street at Eisenhower Avenue, and intersections along Van Dorn Street. Another mitigation improvement includes enhanced transit service along Eisenhower Avenue between the Van Dorn Metrorail station and the Eisenhower Metrorail station. This enhanced service could include improved transit headways, extended hours of operation, improved shelters, and transit signal priority.

The Plan recommends a comprehensive transportation strategy and improvements to the transportation system to support the proposed development as outlined below:

- Transportation network that includes a new street grid to distribute vehicular traffic, improve traffic flow, and improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity;
- Additional north-south connections over the Norfolk Southern railroad, including the Multi-modal bridge, Farrington Connector, and additional non-motorized crossings;
- Improved pedestrian network that includes improved, safe sidewalks along all streets within the plan area to provide connectivity to parks, commercial uses, transit and regional trail facilities;
- Improved bicycle network that includes enhanced bicycle facilities along Eisenhower Avenue, S. Pickett Street, Van Dorn Street, Farrington Connector, the Multi-modal bridge and Clermont Avenue;
- Bicycle parking and proposed bikeshare stations within each neighborhood and at major activity centers throughout the Plan area;

- Improved transit including the West End Transitway, a realigned Van Dorn Circulator, improved transit headways on DASH routes, and enhanced transit service along Eisenhower Avenue between the Van Dorn Metrorail station and Eisenhower Metrorail station;
- Parking management, including the establishment of performance parking, smart parking technology, and shared parking; and
- Transportation Management Plan (TMP) strategies such as a TMP District, transit incentives, vanpool and carpool sharing, car share, electric vehicle charging stations, and TMP monitoring.

The results of the traffic analysis show that additional development beyond Baseline levels generates additional traffic necessitating capacity improvements to mitigate the traffic impacts. The multi-modal bridge is a key transportation improvement that is needed to improve multi-modal connectivity and improve overall traffic operations. Without the bridge, there are more intersections that fail than with the bridge both with and without the additional mitigation improvements. If the multi-modal bridge is not constructed, then Van Dorn Street would need to be widened to accommodate the West End Transitway and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The intersection of Eisenhower Avenue at Van Dorn Street is expected to experience congestion and delay under the 2040 Baseline alternative; however, under the 2040 Build scenario with the multi-modal bridge and other mitigation improvements, the operation improves significantly at that intersection. In general, the 2040 Build scenario with the multi-modal bridge, and with the additional mitigation, results in lower overall intersection delays and improved travel times along Van Dorn Street and Eisenhower Avenue as compared to the 2040 Build scenario without the bridge, or without the mitigation.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Transportation Master Plan Goal comparison to Eisenhower West SAP