

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 20, 2016

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 2 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. FUNDING UPDATE

Washington Area Transit Authority (WMATA) – WMATA’s Board and jurisdictional staff will continue to review the draft operating and capital budget presented at the Finance and Administration Committee on December 3, 2015. More information on the draft operating and capital budget is addressed in the memorandum for Agenda item #5. City Council has also selected new members to serve on the WMATA Board. Councilman Paul Smedberg is the new City of Alexandria representative for the WMATA Board.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) – The NVTA Board approved all requests submitted for FY 2017 funds for evaluation, including the City’s submittals for funds for the Potomac Yard Metro and the West End Transitway. Evaluation should be completed in the spring. Applications for CMAQ and RSTP funds in FY 2022 were forwarded to NVTA for their consideration. These applications are being reviewed, and a draft set of recommendations will be developed by the end of January, 2016. CMAQ and RSTP recommendations should be considered by an NVTA committee in February. City Council has also selected new members to serve on the NVTA Board. Mayor Allison Silberberg is the new primary representative for City of Alexandria with Councilman Tim Lovain as the alternate.

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) - NVTC receives some funds from a regional gasoline tax, which is levied at the rate of 2.1 percent on fuels sold/delivered in bulk in Northern Virginia. Due to the falling price of fuel, and the fact that there is no floor on the tax collected, all northern Virginia communities are receiving less money than they had received prior to the enactment of HB2313 in 2013. As an example, Alexandria has lost over \$1,000,000 from this source in calendar year 2015. Efforts are being made to enact a floor on the regional fuels tax in the next General Assembly session. See Attachment 1 for more details.

City Council has also selected new members to serve on the NVTC Board. Councilmen Paul Smedberg and Councilmen Tim Lovain are the new City of Alexandria representatives with Councilman Justin Wilson as the alternate.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) – The City will submit applications for FY 2017 projects by February 1st, , which are in the current adopted Capital Improvement Plan (FY 2016 - FY 2022).

Federal Government – The federal government passed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act on December 4, 2015, which is the first multi-year (5 year) transportation authorization bill passed in the last 10 years. The FAST Act will increase transportation funding over the life of the bill. In the area of public transportation, it provides additional funding for bus and bus facility needs, provides competitive grant programs for transit, and allocates \$150 million/year to the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement (PRIIA) program, which benefits Washington’s WMATA services. The legislation also places transit benefits on par with parking benefits, which raises them to \$255/month from the current \$130/month. The Transportation Alternatives program is rolled into the Surface Transportation block grant given to the states under the FAST Act.

Background: The City’s transportation program has many sources of funding from federal, state, regional, and local sources. Many of these sources require that submissions be supplied in November, December, and January. The preceding discussion summarizes the significant deadlines that must be met during this time period.

B. WEST END TRANSITWAY

Per the current project schedule, staff plans to bring the West End Transitway to the Transportation Commission for discussion and endorsement in February 2016. Throughout the first quarter of FY 2016, the Project Team will work to complete the two key project deliverables: the Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Documentation. Other technical work to be completed includes 1) finalization of Conceptual Engineering documents and updated capital costs and 2) refinement and completion of the Development Potential Tech Memo. Staff met with Southern Towers management in December (and will meet again in early 2016) to discuss proposed operations and capital improvements to accommodate the West End Transitway.

Background: In December 2013, the City kicked off an Alternatives Analysis (AA) / Environmental Documentation for the West End Transitway (also referred to as Corridor C) as part of the Federal NEPA Process. The AA / Environmental Documentation will analyze and refine the alignment as defined by the CWG and City Council and will identify any impacts and potential mitigation associated with the recommended alternative. The study is partially funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is the first step towards applying for a federal Small Starts grant for project design and construction.

For more information on the West End Transitway, please visit:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/westendtransitway>

C. PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Since the last Transportation Commission meeting, staff has met with the Technical Advisory Committee to discuss comments on the draft version of the Plan and its associated appendices. Staff released a draft of the Plan to the public on January 14, through AlexEngage! at which time the Plan was also transmitted to the Ad Hoc Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Advisory Committee. The Committee met on January 19, 2016 to provide comments on the draft plan. Alex Engage will be used to solicit and collect public feedback on the Plan, through January 31, providing the public with two and a half full weeks to comment on the Plan. The comments received will inform an updated draft to be presented to the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission and Council later in the spring.

Background: The City is conducting an update of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, and developing Complete Streets Design Guidelines, which will be completed in early 2016. The purpose of this update to the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and development of a Complete Streets Design Guidelines will be to:

- Develop a non-motorized system that addresses the needs of all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and transit riders) and is consistent with the vision of the Transportation Master Plan, which encourages transportation options and reduced dependence on the private automobile;
- Develop both a bicycle network and pedestrian case study areas
- Develop a framework for implementing non-motorized policies and projects citywide

More information is available at: www.alexandriava.gov/pedbikeplan

D. POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) have been received from the City of Alexandria, WMATA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the National Park Service (NPS). The City and aforementioned agencies are coordinating to resolve the comments and revise the document. The Final EIS is on schedule for public release in late winter 2016, with Records of Decision (RODs) from FTA and NPS planned in spring 2016.

The design process for the Metrorail station is continuing. The next meeting of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG) has been moved from January to February 11 to allow additional time to develop a refined station concept.

Background: The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station 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.

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

E. KING STREET METRORAIL STATION

Final design and the development of bid documents are progressing for this project. The goal is to have this project advertised in the spring of 2016.

Background: The King Street Metrorail Station is Alexandria's largest transit facility and requires significant updates, expansions, and safety improvements. The City began addressing these needs by requesting WMATA conduct a feasibility study for rebuilding the access facilities at the lot in 2006. The result of this study was released in March, 2008. Through an extensive vetting process with the general public and stakeholders, the City developed a design for the station that improves non-motorized access, bus access, shuttle and taxi access, short term rental car access, and aesthetics. In 2012, the design was endorsed by the Transportation Commission, the City Council, and the Planning Commission. After approval, the design was refined, and the City determined that some of the features of the facility needed to meet City standards rather than WMATA standards. A long discussion between WMATA and the City resulted in a decision that allowed the facility to be designed using City standards. WMATA gave the City a permanent easement to construct a transit facility, if the City maintained the facility in perpetuity. After this agreement, a more detailed design was produced for the facility, and the cost was higher than budgeted. The improvement was placed in the FY 2016 CIP budget process, and eventually acquired sufficient funding to be constructed.

F. MOTORCOACH STUDY AND TASK FORCE

Since the last Transportation Commission meeting, an eNews and Task Force membership application have been released to the public. Applications for membership were due at 5pm on January 20, at which time staff began its review to make recommendations to the City Manager for appointment. The four (4) Board and Commission representatives have either been appointed or identified for appointment at their upcoming Commission meetings.

Staff has developed a series of new potential loading and unloading locations to present to the Task Force at its first meeting, to be held in February. A list of pros, cons, and impact to on-street parking accompanies each potential location.

Background: Due to pending development along the Waterfront and within Old Town, the City faces the loss of all three of its current short-term motorcoach parking locations (15 spaces total), as well as the loss of an unloading and loading location on the Strand. This loss necessitated a re-examination of motorcoach parking and loading/unloading spaces. The Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force, which operated 2004-2005 and 2008-2010, will provide new recommendations to staff regarding future short-term parking and loading/unloading locations. Staff will seek Commission comment and endorsement on these recommendations, which will in turn be transmitted to Council.

G. SEMINARY ROAD HOV RAMP

The I-395 at Seminary Road HOV ramp was opened on January 11, 2016. Along with this work, VDOT is constructing a new 14 foot wide pedestrian bridge over I-395. The ramp allows for 24 hour HOV access only. The City will be conducting traffic counts along Seminary Road later this spring, to determine traffic impacts of the new ramp. This pedestrian bridge is expected to open in late January.

Background: The I-395 HOV ramp to the Seminary Road overpass was recommended as part of the BRAC 133 traffic mitigation measures. When the Washington Services Headquarters selected the Mark Center site to relocate to, a number of traffic studies were conducted. The City formed an ad hoc group to work with the Army, VDOT and others to ensure all needs were met. The ad hoc group and traffic consultants developed a number of short term, midterm and long term traffic mitigation measures for BRAC. The original plan was to have direct access from I-395 onto the Mark Center Site. VDOT conducted a study that considered five alternative configurations. The most promising alignment required the direct access ramp to traverse along the northernmost section of the Winkler preserve. The impacts of this alignment on the Winkler Preserve were considered unacceptable by the community so the HOV ramp was constructed as a compromise. While the City initially requested to VDOT that the ramp not allow for northbound right turns onto eastbound Seminary Road, this request was not accepted by the Federal Highway Administration.

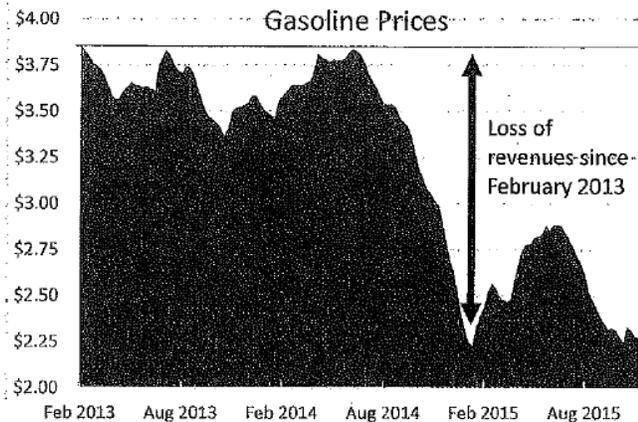
Fuels Tax Floor Would Stabilize Regional Transit Funding



January 2016

Where Things Stand

Since 2013, NVTC has experienced as much as a 40 percent decrease in monthly motor fuels tax collections – funding that is used to support capital and operating expenses for transit that serves Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. Because the tax is based on the sales price of fuel, the tax fluctuates with the change in the price of fuel. The State gas tax has protections to keep a minimum level of revenue; however, the regional gas tax does not.



What is the Regional Motor Fuels Tax?

The Motor Vehicle Fuels sales tax is levied at the rate of 2.1 percent on fuels sold/delivered in bulk in the Northern Virginia area. The tax is imposed on the sales price of fuel to retail dealers, and includes other state and federal taxes in the base. The tax is collected by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and remitted to NVTC where it is held in trust for its member jurisdictions' restricted use. The NVTC WMATA compact members, which include the counties of Fairfax and Arlington, and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church, are required to use the tax for Metro subsidies. Loudoun County may use the tax for any transportation purpose.

The Regional Motor Fuels sales tax was first levied in 1981 at the rate of 2 percent of retail sales. Effective January 1, 2010, the tax was changed to a 2.1 percent tax on a wholesale basis (Virginia Code Section 58.1-2291). The increase in the rate was to account for the loss of dealer profit that was part of the two percent tax base when it was a retail tax.

Why have revenues fallen 40 percent?

Because the tax is based on the sales price of fuel, the tax fluctuates with the change in the price of fuel. Recently, gas tax collections have decreased by as much as 40% in some months compared to 2013, with similar decreases experienced by our partner transportation district, the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). While HB2313 created a floor for the statewide gas tax, a floor was not established for the regional gas tax.

What would happen if the floor was restored?

In 2013, legislation was passed that put a minimum threshold of revenues from the State gas tax – to a level no less than the revenue that was available at the time of the law's passage - effectively protecting the amount of revenue available at the State level. During calendar year 2015 alone, NVTC lost \$13.3 million in revenue because the regional tax lacks the same protection as the statewide tax.

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
Regional Motor Vehicle Fuels Sales Tax
Lost Revenue Without Fuels Price Floor
Calendar Year 2015
(\$ in Thousands)

	Actual Collections	Lost Revenue Without Floor
City of Alexandria	\$ 2,634.6	\$ 1,039.8
Arlington County	3,108.6	1,103.0
Fairfax County	19,069.3	7,370.2
City of Fairfax	1,284.0	531.4
City of Falls Church	378.0	165.6
Loudoun County	7,860.8	2,943.4
Total NVTC	<u>\$ 34,335.3</u>	<u>\$ 13,153.3</u>