

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

---

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 17, 2017

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: CARRIE SANDERS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #4 – OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN

---

**ISSUE:** Endorsement of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Update for consistency with the Transportation Master Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Transportation Commission receive the update on the Old Town North Small Area Plan Update, hold a public hearing, and endorse the Plan for its consistency with the Transportation Master Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** The current Old Town North Small Area Plan was adopted in 1992. The planning effort to update this small area plan began in September 2015 with the appointment of an Advisory Group that held fifteen meetings through the course of the project. In addition, a number of community meetings were held during the planning process. The plan is anticipated to conclude in June 2017 with the Plan's adoption. As part of this process, a week-long charrette was held in November 2016 to identify issues, needs, and ideas for a broad range of categories including transportation, housing, land use, and open space. A mini-charrette occurred from June 23-25, 2016 which was used to begin developing small area plan recommendations based on the community input received to date.

The transportation analysis for this update was conducted in three phases over the planning period. The first phase of analysis was conducted in spring 2016 and included a preliminary examination of the potential two-way conversion of Madison and Montgomery Streets, identifying potential railbanking needs and considerations of the Norfolk Southern rail spur, streetscape improvement needs, street connectivity options, and considerations for transit in the area. The second phase of analysis was conducted in spring/summer 2016 and included a parking study to determine the existing parking utilization (on-street and certain off-street locations) in the Old Town North area, and preliminary recommendations. The third phase of analysis, which began in fall 2016, is a more detailed transportation study that identifies the traffic impacts associated with the proposed land use changes. The third phase includes recommendations related to streets, non-motorized improvements, transit improvements and parking.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/86032>

**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 transit, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to metrorail stations, use of the Norfolk Southern rail spur, connectivity between the power plant site and the existing street network, parking, and traffic calming.

The Plan Update is consistent with the goals included within the City's Transportation Management Plan (2008). 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 improves pedestrian connectivity by identifying areas for enhanced sidewalks and green streets, new pedestrian connections within the Power Plant site, and separated pedestrian and bicycle trails within a new linear park along the Norfolk Southern rail spur as well as along the Power Plant site waterfront. It is consistent with the bicycle connections in the Pedestrian and Bicycle chapter of the Transportation Master Plan, while adding additional bicycle improvements, including through the Power Plant site and along Slaters Lane. Transit recommendations include implementation of the Old Town Circulator and the development of a new north-south transit route to connect Old Town North and the Power Plant site to the future Potomac Yard Metrorail station. The Plan improves overall vehicular mobility by creating a more connected and urban roadway network, extending the existing street grid layout to provide better circulation and connectivity for all modes of travel. It also improves a number of intersections to accommodate vehicular traffic, and recommends a new east-west street connection between the Power Plant site and West Abingdon Drive.

### **Transportation Analysis**

The comprehensive transportation study undertaken in the development of the Plan Update examined the transportation impacts within the defined Plan area, and extended beyond the Plan boundaries to include a total of 30 intersections in the study. The transportation study compares the full Build scenario of the plan area in 2040 to existing conditions and a 2040 Baseline scenario (which assumes only planned and approved development, and current planned transportation improvements). The transportation analysis examines the impacts of the changes in land use, the new roadway network, but also builds in background and approved development. The transportation analysis used a microsimulation model (VISSIM) for the ten intersections along Washington Street given the higher volumes, transit, and larger vehicles along this street, as well as a number of intersections that are approaching capacity, or where queue spill back is a concern. For the remaining intersections, the Synchro model was used.

The 2040 Build scenario assumes additional transportation improvements beyond the Baseline scenario, as well as additional land use development and redevelopment of the Power Plant site. The additional transportation improvements include an extension of the street grid into the Power Plant site. One of the key considerations of the plan was converting Montgomery Street to a two-way

operation to better support the proposed commercial uses along the street east of Washington Street. An initial model analysis determined that the two-way conversion was feasible, and this assumption was further analyzed as part of the full traffic analysis. The conversion requires additional improvements at the intersection of Washington Street at Montgomery Street. The 2040 Build scenario also assumed the future Potomac Yard Metrorail station and the recommended new north-south transit route, as well as the Old Town circulator.

All future redevelopment applications associated with the proposed development, especially within the Power Plant site, will require additional traffic studies to analyze specific impacts based on specific development plans. Each will include additional transportation data available at that time and more refined development information. The future studies will also update the traffic impacts associated with specific development and refine the recommended improvements to the transportation plan.

One of the key results of the traffic analysis is that, the existing grid helps to facilitate connectivity across all modes, and most intersections operate at an acceptable level of service in the 2040 Build scenario. The areas with the highest level of congestion occur at intersections of Washington Street at Bashford Street, and Washington at Slaters Lane. However, the intersection of Washington at Bashford Street experiences heavy congestion under both existing and 2040 Baseline conditions as well. To help mitigate these two intersections, a number of additional transportation improvements are recommended, including reconfiguration of both East Abingdon and West Abingdon Drives north of Slaters Lane, reconfiguration of Bashford street across George Washington Parkway, and a new east-west street connecting the Power Plant site to West Abingdon Drive. All of these improvements would include associated pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and help to disperse traffic going to or coming from the redeveloped Power Plant site.

The significant investments in the multimodal transportation network already planned and recommended in the Plan will create the capacity to move people and accommodate increases in travel demand associated with additional development in Old Town North, and the redeveloped Power Plant site specifically.

The Transportation Commission is tasked with reviewing and endorsing the Plan to ensure its consistency with the City's Transportation Master Plan. Attachment 1 compares the Small Area Plan with a No Action, and its consistency with the goals in the City's Transportation Master Plan.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Old Town North SAP comparison to Transportation Master Plan