



City of Alexandria

Transportation Commission

Regular Meeting

May 17, 2017
7:00 p.m.
Council Workroom

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Chairman Jerry King, Vice Chair Stephen Klejst, Commissioner David Brown, Commissioner James Lewis, Commissioner Melissa McMahon, Commissioner Carolyn Schroeder, Commissioner Ryan Jones, Commissioner Jake Jakubek, Commissioner Christine Michaelis

Staff Present: Carrie Sanders – T&ES, Christopher Ziemann – T&ES, Allan Fye – T&ES, Steve Sindiong – T&ES, Charonne Gray -T&ES

Chairman Jerry King called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

1. **March Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Jerry King requested edits to the minutes, Chairman King and Commissioner Stephen Klejst submitted changes, which had been included by Staff. A motion to accept the changes was made by Commissioner Klejst and seconded by Commissioner McMahon. The minutes were unanimously approved.

2. **Updates to Receive (Consent Items)**

Division Chief Christopher Ziemann provided updates on the Vision Zero Action Plan, stating that City staff and consultants have scheduled five pop-up events in May to engage the community on traffic safety and to raise awareness of the Vision Zero Action Plan. Staff intentionally did not announce the dates, times, and locations of the events to the public to keep the input more organic.

Commissioner McMahon asked whether the materials being considered in the plan will be made available on the project website and whether specific data sets will be published. Staff answered that the WikiMap is available for the public to provide input and to retrieve information on troubled areas, and that Staff will consult with the Vision Zero coordinator regarding specific data sets.

Deputy Director Carrie Sanders briefed the Commission on the 72 Hour Parking Rule review. She stated that Staff presented proposed changes to the 72 hour rule to the Traffic and Parking Board at their March meeting. The changes to the rule would allow residents to park on-street for up to two weeks, for example if a resident needs to travel, by exempting their vehicle from the 72 hour rule

(prohibiting a vehicle to remain unmoved on-street for more than 72 hours). Residents would be allowed four exemptions per year. A resident can park within 1/8 mile of their place of residence to provide flexibility for parking availability, specific restrictions, etc. Residents must be in compliance with any posted restriction signage. This rule would be a pilot exemption, with an evaluation after approximately one year. There was significant public outreach to obtain responses to the proposed changes. The Traffic and Parking Board voted unanimously to advance the pilot exemption recommendation to City Council.

The City Council received the report on the proposed changes during the legislative meeting on April 25, 2017. A public hearing was held where speakers voiced their opinions to the council members. The City Council approved the changes presented by Staff with an amendment to extend the pilot period from one year to two years, and removed the ability for residents to apply for a contiguous exemption which would have allowed for 28 days of on-street parking instead of the amended 14 days. The City Council tasked the Transportation and Environmental Services (TES) to make this a part of TES Parking Work Plan. TES presented this to City Council a part of the Parking Work Plan which includes: the Motor Coach Task Force, Residential Parking Permit Policy, and the 72 Hour Parking Rule.

Division Chief, Allan Fye discussed with the Commission the outline funding plan for the Commonwealth Transportation Board's (CTB) Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Vice Chairman Stephen Klejst and Allan Fye attended the public hearing and presented testimonies on behalf of the State of Virginia.

The CTB published the SYIP draft plan for FY2018 – FY2023 which includes the requested funding for the four of the five Smart Scale projects that the City submitted: DASH Bus Service and Facility Expansion - \$11,134,000, West End Transitway Southern Towers Transit Facilities - \$10,000,000, Traffic Adaptive Signal Control Fiber Optic - \$7,675,900, and Backlick Run Trail Phase I - \$5,044,545. The CTB is expected to adopt the final draft plan for FY 2018 – FY 2023 on June 21, 2017. Requested funding for CMAQ and RSTP programs has been approved. Funding for CMAQ projects was approved for \$2.3 million and the RSTP program was approved for \$1.5 million. This will support projects going forward towards the TDM program, various studies, ITS integration, improvements to bus shelters around the City, Capitol Bikeshare, and improvements to the Van Dorn Metrorail Station. Currently, there are projects that still have funding from Smart Scale (formally known as the HB2).

The State is also allocating \$16.5 million to include a pedestrian tunnel between Union Station and the King Street Metro Station. Commissioner Klejst asked about the timing of the King Street Tunnel in relation to the larger scale King Street Rail and Transportation project, and whether this would complicate either project. Staff responded that the tunnel construction would happen very late or after the King Street project finishes.

Carrie Sanders also interjected that funding for the West End Transitway was an important milestone in the project. The \$10 million awarded from Smart Scale can be leveraged to request future funding for other portions.

Commissioner McMahon inquired about the funding for the Holmes Run Connector Trail stating that VDOT has awarded only \$429,619 for it, however a total of \$800,000 was requested by the City, endorsed by the Transportation Commission, and approved by the City Council as part of the original grant application. Carrie Sanders explained the cost of the project could be reduced if asphalt trail is used instead of a pervious surface that is currently planned. TES would review other mitigations that

could be applied as an alternative to the pervious trail material and would work to reduce the cost of the project, or the project could be phased to work within the awarded grant amount.

3. Commission Updates

Commissioner McMahon updated the Commission on the Commercial Parking Task Force. At the last meeting, the Task Force discussed detailed data collection of existing office parking usage ratios from around the City. The Task Force compared the usage ratios to the ratios prescribed in the zoning requirements, and to other factors (i.e. proximity to Metro and other transit, Walkscore, etc.). Since the data set was under 20 buildings, there could be a correlation with metro access and walk scores that would only be determined with a larger dataset. Staff was tasked to provide additional data from other parts of the region such as Arlington and Alexandria office buildings. Staff will also evaluate credits for different options such as shared parking and offsite accommodation.

Commissioner McMahon reminded the Commission that she is acting as a liaison on behalf of the Transportation Commission to inform the Commission but is also requesting feedback on how she may work with Staff to address subject matters the Commission would like to weigh in on in future meetings. Commissioner Brown expressed that the Commission will be influenced by the knowledge collected by the Task Force. His preference is to wait until there is an evaluated result before the final product. He also asked for the opportunity to provide some input at appropriate times.

Commissioner Brown asked if the current office ratios had taken building occupancy into account. Staff's current sample was designed to measure full offices and Staff did not include office buildings that were less than 75% full. However, there are some irregularities that need to be accounted for. For example, Harbor Center located on the 200 block of Union Street does not have metro access but still has a very low parking occupancy rate. Commissioner Jones asked whether the parking ratios were permanent when a building is complete or whether they are contingent on a future project such as the West End Transitway. He also asked whether existing parking can be repurposed. Commissioner McMahon responded that because parking is built when buildings are developed, it is static and difficult to convert to other uses. She also stated that the Task Force discussed flexibility regarding future office spaces, buses, and market demands.

Commissioner Ryan Jones briefed the Commission on the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan update, the Group's 13th meeting. The Transportation Commission's endorsement letter was sent to City Council.

On May 3, 2017, Commission Ryan Jones attended the Fairfax County Autonomous Vehicle Symposium at the Government Center. They held vehicle demonstrations including one from a company called ETrans located in Fairfax County in the Mosaic District. The focus was on vehicle infrastructure, software, and hardware applications. According to the Washington Post, the State of Virginia is intentionally not regulating their autonomous vehicles, with the goal of allowing innovative companies to test their vehicles. The transportation model of ride share is a possible future scenario for the future uses of autonomous vehicles. He discussed the potential future need for changes in curb side management to designate ride share zones. He also described how the dynamics of the I-66 corridor could change the HOV 3 lane to a toll lane. Uber is launching an Uber Commute Service that is seeking to monetize and include technology in carpooling. A company named Via Ride operating in New York and California is offering a flat rate of \$5.00. Pittsburg has autonomous vehicles for safety measures with a driver in case of an emergency. Commissioner McMahon expressed that public transportation is an important opportunity to operationalize autonomous vehicle technology. A foreseeable challenge with autonomous vehicles is how to retain transit operators and the important role they provide in terms of customer service to the passengers. Technology changes can be hard on certain populations and some communities are not easily adaptable to change.

Thoughtful efforts ahead of time could prepare the City's workforce.

Commissioner Jakubek updated the Commission on the Eisenhower West/Landmark Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group. The Advisory Group held a meeting on Monday, April 24, 2017 at the My Father's House Christian Church located at 4746 Eisenhower Avenue, where they will review the Air Quality analysis, Phase II Infrastructure plan, and Capital Improvement projects.

Commissioner Klejst updated the Commission on the Dash Board Meeting. General Manager Josh Baker presented two new ideas he is looking to move forward. First, buses that are targeted for disposal could be marketed and sold as is to be used for refurbishing or parts instead of being used as scrap metal. Second, he is also proposing free rides to students at the middle and high school levels as well as those who are eligible for the DOT Free Ride programs. Information from Fairfax County's bus programs suggests that the City of Alexandria should run a similar program. The benefits of this program could be the reduction of fleet size for the school system. Commissioner Jones commented that 5% of students are utilizing bus passes in Fairfax County and the program has been in progress for years. The goal would be that conditioning commuters from an early age to use public transit could produce riders for life. The student bus passes in Fairfax are for the Connector and Cue buses only.

4. Old Town North Small Area Plan-Public Hearing

Deputy Director Carrie Sanders presented the Old Town North Small Area Plan and introduced Project Manager Steve Sindiong of Transit Services and Jeff Farner of Planning and Zoning. Ms. Sanders also recognized former Transportation Commissioner Maria Wasowski who is serving as the Chair for the Small Area Plan. The Plan recommends converting Montgomery Street to two-way operations. There have been concerns of loading on some of the streets which will be addressed by the Traffic and Parking Board this summer. Deputy Director Jeff Farner of the Department of Planning and Zoning explained that Planning and Zoning, along with TES, is moving forward in redirecting focus from accommodating vehicles to planning for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The Plan Area was reviewed for new potential development sites and in particular the power plant site. The former power plant site is currently closed and PEPSCO, along with NRG, are in the process of negotiating a land agreement to resolve the ownership issues.

Project Manager, Steve Sindiong presented the transportation recommendations. The Small Area Plan connects streets with a tight grid for better access for vehicles, bicycles, transit, and pedestrians. The plan also improves access to the Braddock Road Metro Station. In terms of mode splits relating to traffic congestion, the modeling predicts that 40% of people who live in the Small Area Plan will commute by car to work during peak hours, another 40% will take transit, and 15% will walk or bike.. The transportation plan prioritizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements over vehicular improvements. A key recommendation in the plan is the extension of the street grid into the power plant site and extending Royal Street into the Plan area. The Plan recommends improving the trail that runs along the waterfront and improving the Mount Vernon Trail. Additionally, the Plan recommends the improvement of the rail spur which is still in operation but is not actively used. During the reconstruction of the power plant, the Plan recommends redevelopment of the linear park and conversion to a green street. Staff is examining Madison Street for potential bicycle enhancements, and recommends three bikeshare stations. In terms of transit improvements, the plan recommends a circulator route, a new north-south route to serve the Power Plant, and the Potomac Yard Metro Station.

Commissioner McMahon inquired whether the existing George Washington Parkway (GW Parkway) and the proposed parkway off of Fairfax Street would be similar and whether the design would have

limited access, similar to the GW Parkway. Staff clarified that the extension of Fairfax Street would be designed using the Complete Street guidelines and would be an urban street, different from the GW Parkway.

In addition, a left turn pocket would be added in both directions on Montgomery Street at Washington Street. Also recommended are: a new east-west street from the power plant to West Abingdon Lane, lane configuration improvements on West and East Abingdon Lane at Slaters Lane, lane configuration improvements at Bashford Lane, and designated loading zones at Washington and Montgomery Streets. Commissioner McMahon asked Staff whether Slaters Lane at the exit of G.W. Parkway would have two right turn lanes. Staff stated there would be one right turn lane, a through-right lane, and a left turn lane. The rail corridor would become a bicycle-pedestrian trail. There were safety concerns for pedestrians crossing to the west side of Washington that TES during improvements to the trail.

The Commission endorsed the Old Town Small Area Plan as consistent with the City of Alexandria's Transportation Master Plan as proposed by Staff.

The Commission opened the floor for a public hearing at 8:55pm and closed at 8:56pm.

5. Other Business

Chair King asked about budget status updates. Staff replied that the budget was adopted without add/delete changes.

The next Transportation Commission Meeting will be held in the Sister City Conference Room 1101.

At 9:00 pm, Commissioner Jake Jakubek made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was second by Commissioner Ryan Jones, voted on and unanimously approved by the Commission.