

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 19, 2017

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: CARRIE SANDERS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #5 – NORTH POTOMAC YARD SMALL AREA PLAN

ISSUE: Endorsement of the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan Update for consistency with the Transportation Master Plan.

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

BACKGROUND: The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (SAP) was approved in 2010. The SAP provides a planning blueprint to guide public and private investment and development decisions in the northern portion of Potomac Yard (also called Landbay F). As written in 2010, *“The Plan focuses on the creation of dynamic urban forms, a complementary mix of land uses, community amenities, and a range of housing opportunities. The Plan is a framework to create one of the most sustainable series of neighborhoods within the region, known for its outstanding Four Mile Run waterfront, parks, public transportation, innovative architecture, environmentally sustainable design and practices, and incorporation of Alexandria’s rich history and culture.”*

In 2015, the North Potomac Yard developer representative indicated a desire to begin the process for redevelopment of the North Potomac Yard, which may necessitate amendments to the 2010 North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan and Design Standards. A North Potomac Yard Advisory Group was established by Council in February 2016. The Advisory Group serves as the community engagement forum to review the Plan and proposed amendments. The Advisory Group began meeting in April 2016, and has held a total of 11 meetings.

The original SAP as adopted in 2010 includes approximately 7.5 million square feet of mixed use development east of Route 1, between Arlington County and E. Glebe Road. The original plan envisioned a realigned Potomac Avenue that would run parallel to the rail tracks, separating a linear park (Landbay K) from the development west of Potomac Avenue within Landbay F. The transportation strategy was designed to facilitate a significant mode shift – from private autos to alternative, more sustainable means of transportation, consistent with the City’s Transportation Master Plan. Recommendations include strategies to manage transportation demand, expand the

street grid and multimodal connectivity, provide additional transit capacity, incorporate an expansive bicycle and pedestrian network and create a culture of people first. The transportation network includes a future Potomac Yard Metrorail station, a dedicated high-capacity transit corridor (Metroway) along Route 1, Silver Meteor Avenue and Potomac Avenue, and improved north-south and east-west pedestrian and bicycle facilities with improved connectivity to the regional trail system.

Throughout the SAP Update process, a number of scenarios have been developed and reviewed by the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee has recommended Option 2 that aligns Potomac Avenue through the center of the development on its current alignment. This option provides an additional 1.5 acres of open space, creates a more active and pedestrian friendly space at the future Potomac Yard Metro station (north entrance), allows for a phased development of the Potomac Avenue and Transitway, maximizes ridership for the Metroway, and provides flexibility of for continued study of the design and character of Potomac Avenue.

With Option 2, the total land use numbers under full buildout is similar to the 2010 adopted plan (7.5 million square feet), however, Option 2 includes nearly double the amount of office space, a reduced amount of retail space, less residential use, and more specificity with certain land uses including a gym, and restaurant uses.

A first phase of development, anticipated to be completed by 2021, will be located to the east of Potomac Avenue that includes a mixture of retail, office, hotel and residential uses. The transitway will operate along Route 1, Evans Lane and Potomac Avenue in mixed traffic, and an intermodal transit stop will be located within proximity to the future Potomac Yard Metrorail station. Phase 2 will include additional development between Route 1 and Potomac Avenue, and is anticipated to be fully built out by 2040. The full buildout assumes that the transitway will be built to accommodate transit in dedicated lanes.

A North Potomac Yard community meeting will be held on April 18 from 6:00pm to 8:00 pm at the Station at Potomac Yard (650 Maskell Street), and an Advisory Committee meeting will be held on April 26 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm at the Station at Potomac Yard. The planning effort is anticipated to conclude in June 2017 with the Plan's adoption by Council, after endorsement by the Transportation Commission on April 19, and approval by the Planning Commission in June. More information on the plan can be found at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/PotomacYardPlan>

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, the treatment of Potomac Avenue, traffic issues at Route 1, 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 incorporates the Route 1 Metroway to serve the neighborhoods, ensuring an easy walk to transit stations, as well as a good connection to the future Potomac Yard Metrorail station. The improved transportation system also expands bicycle and pedestrian options by providing additional facilities (trails, sidewalks, bike facilities 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 also improves a number of intersections to accommodate vehicular traffic.

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 19 intersections in the study.

The transportation analysis examines the impacts of the changes in land use, the new roadway network, but also builds in background and approved development that has changed since the 2010 adopted plan, including South Potomac Yard, and the approved land uses and transportation network from the Route 1 / Oakville Triangle Corridor Plan. In addition, the updated transportation analysis is much more rigorous than the previous analysis, using a microsimulation model (VISSIM), and also takes into consideration the Metroway service that has been operational since 2014.

The study assumed a full buildout by the year 2040, an interim (Phase 1) development by year 2021, and assumes changes in regional traffic patterns over those periods. It compares the proposed land use and roadway network under the Plan update for both horizon years, with the 2010 approved plan. All future redevelopment applications associated with the proposed development will require additional traffic studies to analyze specific impacts based on specific development plans for each site. 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.

The traffic analysis assumes a number of planned transportation improvements that would be completed at the time of opening of the first phase of development, including the Potomac Yard Metrorail station, and intersection improvements at Route 1 / East Reed Avenue, and at Route / E. Glebe Road, and pedestrian and bicycle trail within Landbay K, as well as other transportation improvements recommended in the Route 1 / Oakville Triangle Corridor Plan. The 2040 full buildout also assumes additional improvements, including a much more connected street grid, Metroway operations within dedicated lanes along Potomac Avenue, and additional pedestrian and bicycle improvements to provide connectivity to uses and activity centers, including the Metrorail station.

A key consideration that has been raised by the Advisory Committee is the character of Potomac Avenue both during the interim Phase 1 condition, and the full buildout condition. The Advisory Committee has recommended that Potomac Avenue be designed to be a north-south multimodal urban street that prioritizes pedestrians, bikes, transit and cars in that order. The future design considerations will include a generous (20-25') streetscape on each side, facilitation of safe pedestrian crossings, on-street parking where feasible, a street design that facilitates neighborhood

connectivity on each side of the street, and Metroway service that maximizes accessibility and ridership.

Regardless of whether or at what density North Potomac Yard is redeveloped, Route 1 will operate at capacity in areas during the commuter peak period. With the recommended multimodal transportation network, most intersections will operate acceptably with exception of the intersections of Route 1 / E. Reed Avenue, Route 1 / Potomac Avenue, and Route 1 at the entrance to the Toyota dealership. There is a negligible difference in traffic operations for 2040 under the updated Plan, as compared to the Plan approved in 2010.

The significant investments in the multimodal transportation network already planned and recommended in the Plan such as the new Metrorail station and dedicated transit lanes will create the substantial capacity to move people and accommodate increases in travel demand associated with continued development in Alexandria as well as in Potomac Yard specifically.

The Transportation Commission is tasked with reviewing and endorsing the Plan Update to ensure its consistency with the City's Transportation Master Plan. Attachment 1 compares the Plan Update with the 2010 approved plan, and their consistency with the goals in the City's Transportation Master Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

North Potomac Yard SAP Update comparison to Transportation Master Plan