



## Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force

Meeting Minutes  
28 July 2008  
City Hall, Room 2000

### Attendees

Task Force Members: Rob Aronson, Rich Baier (chair), Stephanie Brown, Bert Ely, Mayor William D. Euille, Chief David Baker, Charlotte Hall, Hubert Herre, Greg Ogden, Sarita Schotta, Councilman Paul Smedberg, Denielle Vendetti, Tara Zimmick-Calico, Yon Lambert (staff), Lorraine Lloyd (staff).

Guests: Peter Pantuso, Wellington Watts, Joanne Platt, Elizabeth Baldwin, Louis Marcus.

Below is a summary of the City of Alexandria's Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force meeting conducted on 28 July 2008.

**Executive Summary:** The primary meeting topics included a group exercise for problem and issue identification. The Task Force also heard a presentation by American Bus Association President and CEO Peter J. Pantuso. The meeting began at 7:10 pm and concluded at 9 pm.

### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Mr. Baier welcomed everyone to the Motorcoach Task Force meeting and reviewed the topics of the evening.

### **2. Review Minutes & Report Back from Constituent Groups**

Mr. Baier reviewed the minutes of the 14 July meeting and asked for comments. There were no comments and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown reported that the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association has established a subcommittee to address motorcoach issues and will provide input on issues such as parking and unloading.

Ms. Schotta said that she has a report by a group of Duke Street residents called "Friends of Old Town." She said the report documents perceived damages to residents' homes.

### **3. Group Exercise: Problem/Issue Identification**

Task Force members had previously been seated at one of four small group tables to which a facilitator has been previously assigned. The members reviewed a list of General Categories/Issues provided by staff and discussed the items on each table, including DRAFT (blank) "Issues Matrix."



Each table selected a recorder and began by individually reviewing comments previously provided by members via e-mail. The members were also encouraged to provide additional individual comments on index cards. Once the group members had time for individual comment, each table consolidated its list of issues onto flip charts.

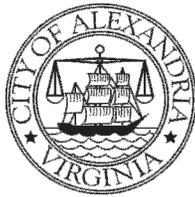
Once each group had provided its issues, each member of the Task Force was given six colored dots to “vote” for the issues believed to be of highest priority/most important. The list of group issues followed by total votes (in parentheses) is outlined as follows:

**GROUP 1**

- Volume of coaches changes seasonally (3)
- Realistic loading/unloading (5)
- How to load/unload overnight guests (hotels) (0)
- Lack of designated coach routes puts coaches onto sensitive streets (small, historical) (11)
- Industry widespread, difficult to notify In advance (0)

**GROUP 2**

- Bus size (0)
- Enforcement (moving/parking & idling) (7)
- Lack of short & long term parking (4)
- Lack of coach info for operators & residents (1)
- Loading & Unloading (3)
- Signage (3)
- Resident parking (0)
- Drive through coaches vs. Stay coaches (2)
- Noise level (speakers) (0)
- Structural damage from vibrations (0)
- Designated routes (lack) (0)
- Street infrastructure (0)
- Tree damage (clearance) (0)



**GROUP 3**

Volume/density	(3)
Base of facts	
Density	
Size	
Noise	
Parking (illegal)	
Handicapped/aging	(6)
Parking- shortfall (long & short)	(9)
Safety & Navigation	
Enforcement	
High-density pedestrian	(3)

**GROUP 4**

Lack of short term parking	(6)
Lack of long-term parking	(0)
Parking is too concentrated	
(smaller pocket short term)	(0)
Loading/unloading. Lack of adequate areas.	
Too concentrated.	(3)
Lack of communication to drivers. Business	
Not giving the information/clearer materials.	(4)
Lack of recommended routes or prohibited streets	(0)
No personal greeters/bus monitors	(1)
Wayfinding not adequate	(0)
Enforcement (improve)	(4)

Once the groups completed “voting” on priorities, the Task Force had a discussion about all the issues and consolidated them into the following list of primary issues/general categories. The list is presented in order of priority and each issue/category includes a recommendation about whether it should be addressed by short-term and/or long-term solutions.

1. Lack of designated routes puts coaches on sensitive streets/safety (short-term)
2. Lack of short term & overnight parking (short-term and long-term)
3. Enforcement (short-term and long-term)
4. Loading and unloading (short-term)
5. Communication/Education (short-term)



The group agreed to use a portion of its next meeting, August 11, to discuss tools and short-term solutions that may address Issue #1: *Lack of designated routes puts coaches on sensitive streets/safety.*

#### **4. Meeting Topic Schedule**

The August 11 meeting is currently reserved for a guest presentation by City of Charleston, SC Director of Tourism Vanessa Turner-Maybank. A short discussion will follow to address Issue #1. Task Force members were encouraged to provide Mr. Baier and Mr. Lambert with questions for Ms. Maybank.

#### **5. Public Comment**

The Task Force heard a presentation by American Bus Association President and CEO Peter J. Pantuso, followed by questions and concerns from the public.

Mr. Pantuso told the group that the ABA represents over 65% of all coaches including 800 individual coach companies, 200+ touring companies and 2,800 suppliers. Mr. Pantuso made the following general discussion points (as provided in his hand written notes):

Coaches are unique in that they provide \$7,500 to \$13,000 per unit

Coaches are the cleanest and most environmentally friendly form of transportation with less of an environmental impact than portrayed.

Buses are less than 50,000 pounds (60% lighter than a tractor trailer).

Visitation may be on/off but buses are increasingly seeing growth beyond students and seniors. The baby boomer market is growing more high end.

The perception of motorcoaches is \$50 hotel rooms and fast food.

Greenbrier does 100s of coaches annually.

Buses are the safest form of transportation with owners and drivers who are concerned about passengers, the environment and overall experience.

Permits will do little than drive companies away.

Permits may be more effective where the City is the destination, not a drive-through as you describe

Other cities that require permits cannot fit a motorcoach at all

Cultural/historical are popular tours and Old Town has this

As DC becomes more restrictive, Old Town has the opportunity to benefit from business and longer reservations

You can't let everyone off at Washington Street

Loads are averaging 40% or 80% (not 30%)

No-one wants idling but it must be reasonable for brakes and for comfort

DC restrictions are primarily around the Capital and as a result of Capital Police restrictions

Parking & enforcement are important, but cannot have one without the other



The following residents also provided comment:

a) Mr. Van Van Fleet said that citizens were not going to be happy with the result if the Task Force did not restrict buses completely from Old Town.

b) Mr. Wellington Watts said that he represents ghost tours and that 60% of his business is from motorcoaches. He averages 130 buses per month and four buses per night. Mr. Watts said that it is important to streamline the process so that it does not impact residential neighborhoods.

d) Mr. Poul Hertel said that references to the previous Task Force and its economic analysis need to consider that the analysis was not fly by night and that its results were conservative. He urged the group not to skimp on new short-term parking. He reminded the group that when discussing bus routes, it needs to consider that DASH and MetroBuses are shorter than motorcoaches and that the same routes may not work for both types of buses. Mr. Hertel also said that the previous Task Force did look at numbers and that the current Task Force may be able to extrapolate bus counts by focusing on Washington Street.

There being no further comment, the Task Force adjourned.