



Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force

Meeting Minutes

27 October 2008

7 pm, City Hall

Sister Cities conference Room 1101

Attendees

Task Force Members: Rob Aronson, Rich Baier (chair), Bert Ely, Mayor William D. Euille, Chief David Baker, Charlotte Hall, Poul Hertel (new appointee for Old Town Civic Association), Hubert Herre, Ellen Stanton, Councilman Paul Smedberg, Lorraine Lloyd (staff), David Huchler (staff), Jamie Bartlett (staff), Yon Lambert (staff).

Guests: Ken Presley, Joanne Platt, Sarita Schotta, Danielle Westphal.

Below is a summary of the City of Alexandria's Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force meeting conducted on 27 October 2008.

Executive Summary:

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Baier welcomed everyone to the Motorcoach Task Force meeting.

2. Review Minutes & Report Back from Constituent Groups

The group reviewed minutes from both the September 8 and October 13 meetings and minutes for both meetings were unanimously approved.

Ellen Stanton suggested that when designating routes the group should note data such as street width, turning radius, vertical clearance, lane usage. The group should keep in mind that traffic is cyclical and the Task Force should reflect connection to other initiatives, i.e., Eco-City. Examples: carbon footprints, emissions, walkability, and less use of vehicles. Rich Baier stressed that it would be critical - especially when reporting to Council - to stay data focused and to look at DASH and Metro routes.

Poul Hertel, President of Old Town Civic Association, reported that they had a membership meeting that dealt exclusively with the motor coach issue. A panel consisted of: Chief David Baker (enforcement), Stephanie Brown (tourism), Bert Ely (citizen), Lance Mallamo (historic) and Victor Para (industry). There was a facilitated Q&A session following the presentations. Concerns/solutions could be split in two sections: (1) short term - education efforts and teaching drivers and businesses re rules and regulations; (2) enforcement has been lax and could be improved and could piggyback with education effort.



The meeting input includes some comments that strict criteria should be used to select routes and a better approach may be to identify streets that cannot be used. The attendees wanted to emphasize Old Town as a walkable city. The general feeling is that the buses are too large and there are too many of them. Attendees wanted to limit the size of buses and limit number of buses. The group also proposed a ‘bus to trolley’ approach. Rich Baier stated that this has been discussed and needed to be a focus as we moved forward. Mr. Baier discussed the jitney proposals, points of destination, use of smaller vehicles, viability of organized loading/unloading, and pedestrian/accessibility issues. Mr. Baier emphasized that the approach of designating streets that were not to be used would be a departure from what the Task Force had previously determined.

3. Review Designated Routes

The Task Force began addressing designated routes by reviewing written comments provided by the Old and Historic District Residents Group. A companion Power Point presentation included references to the existing criteria, DASH routes and entry portals among others.

The group collectively laid out two routes in its previous meeting, which was the trip on the motorcoach. The group also had a discussion of the sightseeing route provided by Betty Ward. There were two primary issues including the windy nature of the route and the overall destinations. The group agreed that sightseeing routes were a different “bucket” than designated routes to parking/drop-off locations and agreed to invite Ms. Ward to address it at the next meeting.

There was some discussion of destination points and the criteria the Task Force has been using to determine gathering points. Most destinations are currently shown on the dynamic GIS map as “Landmarks.”

4. Presentation: Alexandria Police Department (Enforcement)

Captain David Huchler made a presentation about Enforcement (short-term and long-term). The following is a summary of primary recommendations and next steps:

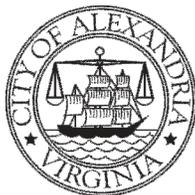
Designated routes

Long term

- Once routes are established - properly sign them for voluntary compliance.

Short Term

- Identify areas or locations (e.g. Union Street) where signs could be immediately improved or erected.



Designated Routes re: King Street

Long term

- Turn the unit block of King Street into One Way (west) - permanently.
- Continue funding the additional staffing (2 officers on Fri/Sat night).

Short term

- Continue with our unit block plan - King Street One Way on Fri. and Sat. nights.

Clearly Defined and Posted Loading and Unloading Areas

Long Term

- Identify appropriate load/unload areas based on criteria established by the Task Force. Ensure proper signage and direction to these areas.

Short Term

- Identify current Loading/Unloading areas and improve the signage.

Enforcement

Long term

- Increased fines - capture enforcement information for performance measuring and identification of problem areas.
- Coordinate with State Police.

Short term

- Continue current efforts.

Communication

- Ensure that the police department is involved in the short term and long term planning/education and dissemination of information. It is important that the police department is regarded as a partner in these issues from start to finish.

5. Presentation: ACVA and Alexandria Office of Communications (Communication/Education)

Alexandria Communications Director Tony Castrilli made a presentation about the City's communication strategies with respect to motorcoaches. The Office of Communications proposes to work in partnership with the Motorcoach Task Force to communicate important messages to residents, City employees, and the media about Task Force decisions and City policies regarding operation of motorcoaches in the Old Town community.



Objectives:

- Keep residents informed about new motorcoach-related developments and policies
- Help City staff to become familiar with and knowledgeable about motorcoach policies and procedures
- Work with Transportation and Environmental Services to promote motorcoach-related resources and policies for Alexandria residents (such as a call-in number for reporting motorcoach violations, etc.)

Method:

- Work in partnership with the Motorcoach Task Force to develop short- and long-term communications strategies using a combination of electronic, print, and broadcast tools, augmented with media relations and other professional services.

Electronic Tools

- City Web Site (alexandriava.gov): Web Boxes, Special Web Features, Video/Audio Podcasts
- E-News: Electronic message service, offered by subscription, to 3,000+ City residents

Print Tools

- *FYI Alexandria* (resident newsletter, circulation 69,000+)
- *CityNews* (employee newspaper, circulation approximately 3,000)
- Press Releases
- Posters, brochures, and related materials
- Paid advertising in local newspapers (Gazette, Times, Washington Post Alexandria/Arlington Weekly)

Broadcast Tools

- City of Alexandria Cable Channel 70
- Comcast Local Access Channels

Professional Services provided by the Office of Communications

- Media Relations/Media Strategy Development
- Project Management
- Event Coordination and Promotion
- Graphic Design and Web Development
- Editorial Services and Content Development



*Short Term Marketing/Communications Campaign (March - June 2009):
Develop a short-term, informational campaign incorporating*

- Web Special Feature page
 - Press Release/E-news
 - Podcasts
 - FYI and CityNews Articles
 - Cable Channel 70 and community cable access show coverage
 - Pitching stories to local media
 - Motorcoach Hotline for residents
 - Brochure and/or flyers \$
- Costs: Printing and copying of flyers, posters

*Long-Term Marketing/Communications Campaign (FY 2010)
Develop a long-term, comprehensive, branded campaign targeting City residents and
business community, featuring products mentioned above, plus*

- Long-term media strategy development
 - “Motorcoach Task Force” E-news subscription list
 - associated print, video, and audio products \$
 - paid advertising in local press and on cable \$
 - Coordination and promotion of community meetings and events\$
- Costs: Printing/copying of flyers, posters, and brochures; paid advertising in local press and on cable; and coordination of community meetings and events

In a second presentation, Lorraine Lloyd, Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association vice-president of sales, explained that the ACVA has been tasked with communicating the Motorcoach Task Force Recommendations and Guidelines to the industry. The ACVA will enhance current communication activities and develop a public relations plan to include the following short term and on-going activities:

- I. Enhancement of current print and electronic communication tools:
 - www.visitalexandriava.com - new site to launch early November 2008
 - Development of *Driver Information Micro Site* to include: rules, regulations, enforcement, interactive mapping tool, directions from north and south, where to eat and where to stay
 - Professional re-design and print of ACVA Motorcoach brochure
 - *Access Alexandria Group Tours* (ACVA Quarterly Tour & Travel E-newsletter)



- II. Educate local and regional businesses to insure effective motorcoach management
- Alexandria constituent groups working with the motorcoach industry for leisure and corporate related groups to include hotels, restaurants, cultural and historic sites, tourist attractions and service providers, etc; regional Destination Management Companies (DMOs) working with our businesses
 - Provide information and tools to disseminate to clientele when booking group business: Motorcoach Task Force Guidelines, revised Motorcoach brochure (print and electronic), requested link on business website to www.visitalexandriava.com and required informational verbiage for client contracts and agreements
 - Communicate findings and educate constituents through: ACVA Tourism Marketing Forum, hotel sales meetings, personal meetings with appropriate businesses and Old Town Business & Professional Association
- III. Develop media and public relations schedule to reach the following:
- Trade Association media - enhance current ACVA list of media (print and electronic) to reach the tour industry through communications with the primary trade associations to include:
 - United Motorcoach Association: *The Intelligence* (monthly e-newsletter), *Bus & Motorcoach New* (bi-monthly newsletter), Email & Fax Alerts, UMA.org
 - American Bus Association: Buses.org/Operator Trip Planning, *ABA in the News*, *ABA Insider*
 - National Tour Association: NTAOnline.com, *Courier Magazine*
 - The Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington D.C.
 - Additional organizations include: International Motorcoach Association, Greater N.J. Motorcoach Association, Student Youth Tour Association, United States Tour Operators Association, Maryland Motorcoach Association, Virginia Motorcoach Association, GLAMER, Pennsylvania Bus Association, Ohio Travel Association, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Destination DC
 - Independent print and electronic trade media not affiliated with trade associations to include such publications as: Group Travel Leader, Travel Trade, Group Travel Leader, Going on Faith Travel Trade, Byways Magazine, Bus Tours Magazine, Senior Group Travel Magazine and Virginia Group Travel Magazine



IV. Attendance at appropriate tour and travel tradeshows to include: American Bus Association 2009 - 2010, United Motorcoach Expo (tentative); partner representation at individual shows.

6. Upcoming Meeting Topic Schedule & Legislative Issues

The Task Force will next meet on November 10 at 7 pm.

7. Public & Task Force Q&A

Rob Aronson asked about an endgame for the Task Force. A conversation ensued about designated routes and the primary issues list previously agreed to by the Task Force.

Mrs. Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet provided copies of a matrix and encouraged the Task Force to create a matrix of its own (A copy of the existing, DRAFT Task Force matrix was provided.) Ms. Crenshaw Van Fleet said the Task Force was leaving important issues out of the discussion.

Mr. Townsend Van Fleet said that he did not agree that the City was unable to enforce designated routes, opposed a designated route on King Street and said that the residents pay taxes and should be the first people served.

Councilman Paul Smedberg urged the Task Force to address short-term issues with a vision to long-term solutions. Several task force members commented that long-term options needed to be more fully discussed and the Task Force agreed to do so at its next meeting.

There being no further comments, the meeting was adjourned.