

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2018

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, and T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #3 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. Legislative and Funding Update:

WMATA Legislation to Provide Dedicated Funding - The Virginia General Assembly reconvened on April 10 and will consider amendments by the Governor related to WMATA Dedicated Funding. The General Assembly passed legislation providing WMATA with \$154M in annual capital funding, but the impact to jurisdictions' NVTAs 30% funds is significant. For Alexandria, this translates in a loss of approximately \$2.2M from the City's annual 30% program, the primary funding source for the DASH Fleet Replacement program.

The General Assembly has until April 18 to act on any proposed legislative amendments. City staff will track the proposed amendments and, once the legislation is finalized and signed into law, determine the overall impact to the City. Since this is a continually evolving process, Staff will provide an up-to-date report at the Commission meeting.

Gas Tax – In a separate bill, the General Assembly adopted the installation of a floor on the regional gas tax which effectively guarantees a minimum amount of revenue from the regional gas tax. A portion of the revenue will be dedicated to WMATA as part of the overall annual dedicated funding package and a portion will be dedicated to VRE (Virginia Railway Express) for capital and operating needs.

Transit Capital Fiscal Cliff – The Commonwealth provides capital funding through DRPT's (Department of Rail and Public Transportation) Transit Capital Grant Program to support and encourage capital investment in local transit systems. The grant program is funded through statewide transportation revenue and capital bonds. The funding from bonds will expire in FY19, resulting in a significant reduction in funding available for the capital grant program. These capital grants are a vital source of funding to support the City's investment in WMATA.

During the 2018 Legislative Session, the General Assembly did not act to address the fiscal

cliff. It is assumed that the fiscal cliff issue will be revisited in the 2019 General Assembly Short Session.

B. Potomac Yard Metro Station Update:

At its regular meeting on April 10, the Alexandria City Council will review updates on the new Potomac Yard Metrorail Station project, in anticipation of approving a new funding agreement to enable the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to award a construction contract.

The project's initial budget of \$268.1 million was based on construction cost estimates in 2015. Since that time, sharp increases in the prices of concrete, steel and labor have combined with a shortage of qualified subcontractors in demand for many major transportation projects in the region and nationwide. WMATA received initial bids in March 2017 that significantly exceeded the project's initial budget.

The City and WMATA asked vendors to explore design changes and other savings opportunities to make the project more cost-effective, and vendors submitted revised proposals to WMATA in February 2018. The revised proposals, which are still being reviewed by WMATA and the City, are lower than the original proposals but still higher than the initial project budget. The revised project budget is \$320 million, representing the new \$290 million agreement to provide funds to WMATA for construction, and \$30 million in additional City costs.

The station will be funded through a variety of sources – including the \$1.1 billion in new tax revenue gained primarily from development in Potomac Yard over the next 30 years; regional transportation authority grants; developer contributions; and special tax district revenue – without the need for any local money from the City's General Fund. This means most residents and businesses in Alexandria will not have to contribute existing local tax revenues to the station's construction.

The funding plan for the station currently includes two special tax districts. The "Tier I" district includes commercial properties in the north and central areas of Potomac Yard, and took effect in 2011. The "Tier II" district includes the residential properties in the southern end of Potomac Yard, and is not scheduled to take effect until the new station opens. City Council will consider a staff recommendation on April 10 to eliminate the Tier II district and replace the equivalent project funding with right-of-way easement revenue from a new underground power line proposed for construction along Potomac Avenue.

Once City Council approves the new funding agreement and WMATA awards the contract, the contractor will apply for an amendment to the previously approved development special use permit for the station to incorporate the cost-saving solutions. This process will include extensive public outreach in fall 2018 and consideration of all stakeholder feedback. The permit amendment must be approved by the City's Planning Commission, Board of Architectural Review, and City Council. The National Park Service will also review any revisions to the station design. The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group will continue to meet on a regular basis throughout the project and will provide the forum for community and stakeholder input, feedback and project updates as it did during the initial planning and design phases.

Construction activities are expected to begin in late 2018, with the new station in service in late 2021 or early 2022.

The Potomac Yard area represents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities for Alexandria, with the potential to achieve the vision for an urban mix of uses near transit. The new Metrorail station, to be built on Metrorail's Yellow and Blue Lines between the existing Braddock Road and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport stations, will provide an extensive range of benefits for Alexandria and the surrounding community. The station, which will provide walkable access to regional transportation systems for neighborhoods in the northeast portion of the city, is expected to generate billions of dollars in new private sector investment, and support 26,000 new jobs and 13,000 new residents.

C. Vision Zero Update:

Staff has been working diligently on a number of items related to the Vision Zero Action Plan. Staff is currently working on finalizing the list of Year 1 Engineering Priorities which is under review by the engineering and operations teams within T&ES. Staff has established and is making progress with working groups for Enforcement, Communications, Engineering and Data action items on.

Year 1 Action Item highlights include:

- Completed: Revision and adoption of the Maintenance of Traffic process called the Open Sidewalks Policy that prioritizes pedestrian safety and access in construction zones.
- Substantial Progress: Integration of Vision Zero educational materials into the defensive driving course for all City Employees is under development and will begin this spring. Substantial progress has been made on this action item.

D. Metro Shutdown:

On April 2, transportation blog Greater Washington published an article about a potential future capital project by WMATA that would require the entire Metrorail system south of Reagan Washington Airport to be closed for 90 days.

To date, official details of the proposed shutdown have not yet been made available. At this time, WMATA has only notified the City it needs to make much-needed upgrades and repairs to the tracks, switches, communication systems, signals, power systems, and station platforms along the Blue and Yellow Lines in Alexandria. With so much work occurring at the same time, it may be necessary to shut down significant sections of the Metrorail system.

The City recognizes that the scale of this work will necessarily impact Metrorail service. Similar to the response to SafeTrack, the City will ensure there is adequate notice ahead of Metrorail disruptions and will provide information about transportation alternatives. WMATA has stated that bus bridges will be part of the solution, but it is too early to discuss scope or even understand the impacts. In the meantime, the City will urge WMATA to phase the work and limit closures where practicable.

E. Embark Richmond Highway

On March 20, 2018, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the Planning Commission's recommendation to amend the Comprehensive Plan in support of the Embark Richmond Highway initiative. [Embark Richmond Highway](#) (Plan Amendment 2015-IV-MV1) is a Fairfax County initiative that aims to provide a multimodal transportation system that is inviting for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers that will create opportunities for economic development along the Richmond Highway Corridor. This effort responds to recommendations from the [Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis](#), conducted by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and refines the recommendations from the study to provide more detailed guidance in the Comprehensive Plan for the implementation of transit in the corridor.

The approximately 10.4-mile corridor stretches from North Kings Highway at Huntington Avenue/Telegraph Road to the Fairfax County Parkway near Fort Belvoir. The plan promotes revitalization through mixed-use transit-oriented development, urban design guidelines that prioritize people and the public realm, and Complete Street principles to develop the corridor. These principles are paired with the following major infrastructure recommendations:

- Widening Richmond Highway from four to six lanes;
- Providing separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities on both sides of the roadway; and,
- Preserving a wide median to accommodate future planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

The plan amendment changes the land use mix along the corridor. In terms of net new potential development over the next 30 years, the plan amendment results in about 13,000 more residents (about 6,100 units) and about 8,000 fewer jobs than would have been allowed under the previously approved comprehensive plan. This represents an 8% increase in *activity density*, which is a calculation of the total population and jobs within a land area divided by the size of the land area.