

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 16, 2016
TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
FROM: T&ES STAFF
SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #2 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

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

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. FUNDING UPDATE

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA):

On October 20, 2016 WMATA held a public hearing on proposals to extend the number of hours available for maintenance when the SafeTrack program is finished. Staff will be assembling comments made at the public hearing and at other venues for the Board's attention in December 2016. If the Board approves any changes to Metrorail operating hours, the new hours would go into effect on July 1, 2017.

On October 23, 2016 WMATA started the new NH2 bus service between Huntington Metro, King Street-Old Town Metro, and National Harbor. The pilot service (from October 23 2016 to June 30, 2016) is paid for by Alexandria, Fairfax County, the State of Maryland, and the Peterson Companies.

WMATA's General Manager's released the DRAFT FY18 Operating Budget, which includes a \$290 million funding gap. The proposed Operating Budget also includes the following actions to close the funding gap: management actions, staff reductions, fare increases (rail, bus, and MetroAccess), service cuts (rail and bus), using FTA grants to pay for some capitalized maintenance, and increased operating subsidies from the jurisdictions.

VDOT Revenue Sharing:

The City of Alexandria submitted an application for state Revenue Sharing funds by the deadline of November 1, 2016. The application is for \$2,750,000 which will be used for street reconstruction and maintenance. These funds will be matched by City funds.

FY22 – 23 SMART SCALE (Formerly known as HB2):

VDOT/DRPT received 436 applications from 148 localities and agencies requesting \$9.25 billion in SMART SCALE funds. Within northern Virginia, 62 applications for \$3.28 billion were submitted; the City submitted five applications for \$42.6 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has now estimated that \$700 million to \$1 billion is expected to be awarded for this round of SMART SCALE. In December 2016, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) will release a list of projects that will not be evaluated due to screening and validation. In January 2017, VDOT and DRPT are expected to release project scores and release base funding scenarios. A public comment period on project scores and funding scenarios is scheduled for spring of 2017. The CTB is expected to make the final decision on the FY 22 - 23 SMART SCALE program at the June 2017 meeting.

Background: The City’s transportation program has many sources of funding from federal, state, regional, and local sources. City staff coordinates regularly with representatives from each agency listed above to discuss funding opportunities from state and regional sources and the City’s funding obligations for WMATA.

B. TRANSACTION UPDATE

Staff from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and from member localities and agencies are reviewing and providing input on candidate performance measures which will be used to generate comparative ratings for individual projects and/or small groups of synergistic projects. The Authority is expected to adopt a set of performance measures at their December 8, 2016 meeting.

The second round of TransAction public engagement is taking place this fall with a focus on understanding prioritization factors. The second round of feedback will inform the selection of performance measures, make recommendations for weighting of each measure, and support technical activities scheduled during late fall 2016 and winter 2016/17.

Specific activities include:

- a) An online survey (<http://nvtatransaction.org/>) will be open until November 22nd
- b) Focus groups
- c) Workshop with members of the business community and other stakeholders

The Benchmark Survey completed in the fall 2015 will be repeated with a Tracking Survey in December 2016. This will identify how public perceptions about transportation in the region have changed over the previous year. The TransAction update remains on schedule for the release of a draft plan in spring 2017. The final TransAction plan is expected to be adopted in fall 2017.

Background: The ongoing TransAction update will build on the vision and goals developed for previous TransAction plans: to develop a comprehensive long range transportation plan that reduces congestion and improves the quality of life in Northern Virginia. This new update will be the first following legislation providing a dedicated, sustainable funding stream for transportation projects in Northern Virginia. The TransAction plan will analyze and prioritize

the potential benefits of proposed projects, helping the NVTA make decisions about which projects to fund.

C. FY 2018 – 27 BUDGET UPDATE

Staff provided an update to the Transportation Commission at its October 19, 2016 meeting, and asked for guidance on the FY 2018-27 budget, as well as input toward two questions that were forwarded to the Commission in a letter from the City Manager, dated September 14, 2016. These questions asked the Commission its highest priority for service and initiatives that should be added for FY 2018, and lower priority services that could be potentially reduced in the FY 2018 budget. At that time, the Commission noted that the State of Good repair is a high priority, as well as preservation of the 2.2 cent property tax for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

On October 24, 2016 the Director of T&ES met with representatives from the Transportation Commission, ATC Board, and Environmental Policy Commission to discuss priorities. The Transportation Commission chair noted that priorities should include preservation of the property tax to expand multimodal transportation infrastructure and the Complete Streets program, and that lower priority should be given to bridge repairs, traffic control upgrades and signage and wayfinding. A draft letter to Council is included in Attachment 1.

On November 5, the Council held a retreat where an overview was provided from staff on the WMATA increased funding request for FY 2018 were discussed and how that increased funding places pressure on the City’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). On November 9, City Council provided guidance for the City Manager on the development of the FY 2018 budget. The guidance did not recommend any changes to the TIP. As a result, despite an increase in cost for WMATA, changes to the TIP and how it funds WMATA costs were not recommended.

Background: Each year the City Manager presents a proposed City Budget to the City Council for consideration and action. As part of the budget process, a ten-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is developed that programs funding for major capital projects in the City. Funding for the CIP comes from the City’s general fund, grants, and other non-City sources such as developer contributions. The City has begun the process for the FY 2018-27 budget. The draft budget will be presented to Council on February 21, 2017. Public hearings are scheduled for March 13, and April 22, and the budget is scheduled for adoption on May 4, 2017.

D. POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

The Federal Transit Administration and the National Park Service signed their Record of Decision’s (ROD) for the project.. These federal approvals close out the National Environmental Policy Act process and enable the project to move forward into design and construction. WMATA is planning to release the Design-Build RFP soon and award the Design-Build contract in Spring/Summer 2017. Construction is scheduled to start in late 2017 /early 2018.

Background: The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station project is an infill Metrorail station located between the National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations on the Blue and Yellow

lines in the vicinity of the Potomac Yard Development. For more information on the project, please visit www.alexandriava.gov/potomacyard

E. OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN

Staff has completed conceptual transportation analysis, which includes a preliminary analysis of the potential two-way conversion of Madison/Montgomery Streets, identifying potential railbanking needs / considerations of the Norfolk Southern rail spur, streetscape improvement needs, street connectivity options, considerations for transit in the area, and the parking study. This analysis was discussed at the September and October meetings of the Old Town North Advisory Group.

The parking study for Old Town North is complete and the consultant's report is available on the Old Town North website. Data was collected during May to determine on and off-street parking conditions in the planning area. With regard to on-street parking, the peak occupancy for the overall area does not indicate a parking problem, although several blocks, particularly around the existing retail center, were observed to be full. Issues on these blocks may be attributed to the lack of on-street parking restrictions that would encourage turnover of the spaces. The off-street parking locations that were surveyed were very underutilized, which may present an opportunity for shared parking in the future once on-street demand increases.

Background: The current Old Town North Small Area Plan was adopted in 1992. The planning effort to update this small area plan began in September 2015 with the appointment of an Advisory Group and is anticipated to conclude in January 2017 with the Plan adoption. As part of this process, a week-long charrette was held in November to identify issues, needs, and ideas for a broad range of categories including transportation, housing, land use, and open space. The transportation analysis for this update will be conducted in three phases over the planning period. For more information, please visit: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/86032>

F. MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE

The Motorcoach Task Force held its fourth meeting on September 15, 2016 where it made policy recommendations related to the Ambassador program, communications, fines for idling, satellite facilities, wayfinding, and coordination with other jurisdictions. The recommendations can be found in the meeting summary notes on the project webpage (See below). The Task Force held its fifth meeting on November 10th, where they reviewed staff recommendations for loading zone locations and short term parking, and made amendments and additional recommendations. Staff will develop a report of Task Force recommendations, to be reviewed by the Task Force, and submitted to the Director of T&ES, and later provided to City Council.

Background: Due to pending development along the Waterfront and within Old Town, the City faces the loss of all three of its current short-term motorcoach parking locations (15 spaces total), as well as the loss of space used for unloading and loading on the Strand where queuing occurs during the peak season. This loss necessitated a re-examination of motorcoach parking and loading/unloading spaces. The Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force, which operated 2004-2005 and 2008-2010, will provide input to staff regarding future short-term parking and loading/unloading locations. More information is available at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/MotorcoachTaskForce>

G. NORTH POTOMAC YARD SMALL AREA PLAN UPDATE

The project Advisory Group has recommended moving forward with development Option 2 which 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. The developer’s traffic consultant has begun the transportation analysis based on Option 2. An overview of the transportation analysis and traffic calming plan process was provided to the Advisory Group on November 14, 2016.

Background: The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan was approved in 2010. The North Potomac Yard developer representative recently 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 will serve as the community engagement forum to review the Plan and proposed amendments. More information on the plan can be found at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/PotomacYardPlan>