

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 4 – ALEXANDRIA TRANSIT VISION (ATV) PLAN

ISSUE: Consideration of draft recommended networks of the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan, which will be presented to the Alexandria Transit Company (ATC) Board for approval on December 11, 2019.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission consider and support the draft recommended ATV networks for both 2022 and 2030.

BACKGROUND: The ATV Plan is a joint effort by the City of Alexandria and DASH to redesign the Alexandria bus network from scratch based on current and future transit demand and community transit priorities. DASH and City staff have nearly completed the third round of ATV public engagement, which focused on the presentation of a near term (2022) and a long term (2030) draft recommended network.

This draft recommended network was developed based on:

- 1) Public input during Spring 2019 of two draft network concepts that represented different points on the transit network design spectrum between “Ridership” and “Coverage” goals; and
- 2) Policy guidance from both the Transportation Commission and ATC Board on the appropriate balance between “ridership”-oriented service and “coverage”-oriented service, and the appropriate levels of service for 2022 and 2030.

In the spring of 2019, staff presented two draft network concepts, including a Ridership concept, and a Coverage concept. Below is a summary of the recommendations made by both the Transportation Commission (May 15, 2019 meeting) and the ATC Board (June 12, 2019 meeting), related to recommendations for the ATV network.

- 1. Ridership-Coverage Balance.** *What is the appropriate balance between Ridership-oriented service and Coverage-oriented service that should be targeted for the future Alexandria bus network?*

The Commission recommended to staff and the ATC Board that the ATV network should be designed with approximately 85 percent of the service hours dedicated to ridership-oriented goals, and approximately 15 percent of service hours allocated for coverage-type services. The 15 percent of service that is devoted to coverage-oriented routes or services should focus on maintaining transit access for areas with large numbers of seniors and individuals with limited mobility. The Commission recommended that staff continue to examine ways to address coverage to these communities, such as a future pilot program with flexible demand-response style platforms that are operated with smaller, ADA accessible service vehicles. The project team should also seek to expand all-day and off-peak service levels, while maintaining productive peak-oriented commuter routes to the greatest extent possible.

The ATC Board concurred with the Transportation Commission recommendation and provided guidance to staff to design the ATV network with approximately 85 percent of the service hours dedicated to ridership-oriented goals, and approximately 15 percent of service hours allocated for coverage-type services.

2. Long-Term ATV Investment. *What is the appropriate level of service growth that should be assumed for the final Alexandria Transit Vision Plan in 2030?*

The Commission recommended to staff and the ATC Board that the long-term ATV Plan network represent a 25 percent increase over current service hours by FY 2030. The additional five percent over what was assumed in the development concepts (20 percent) will help to address many of the community concerns relating to existing peak service and areas with high populations of senior and disabled persons.

The ATC Board provided guidance to staff that the long-term ATV Plan network should represent a 20 percent increase over current service hours by FY 2030. This recommendation was made to ensure that 2030 recommendations were consistent with the network concepts and could be realistically implemented by 2030.

3. Short-Term ATV Implementation Plan Investment. *What is the appropriate level of service growth that should be assumed for the short-term implementation plan for the ATV in FY 2021 and FY 2022?*

The Transportation Commission recommended to staff and the ATC Board that the Short-Term ATV Implementation Plan should represent an 8 percent increase over current service levels by FY 2022. This increase would allow the city to realize some of the immediate benefits from the new ATV network changes while minimizing the negative impact on routes or services that may need to be reduced or reallocated.

The ATC Board also provided guidance to staff that the Short-Term ATV Implementation Plan should represent an eight percent increase over current service levels by FY 2022. In addition, the Board asked staff to also include an option with a zero percent (0%) increase over current service levels by FY 2022 as a conservative approach, in the case that no funding increase is available.

DISCUSSION: The ATV project team used this policy guidance from the Commission and ATC Board toward the development of a draft recommended network for both the near term (2022) and long term (2030). In addition, the community feedback during Engagement Round 2 was also used toward the draft network. A key concern during this engagement round related to ensuring that peak one-seat service from Parkfairfax to the Pentagon is maintained.

In the fall of 2019, the project team released the [draft recommended networks](#). Both the 2022 and 2030 networks include a peak-period network and a mid-day network, using the coverage-ridership balance and service growth recommendations by the ATC Board. The draft networks emphasize high-frequency service along key corridors with existing and future higher density population, jobs and activity hubs, consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. The 2030 draft network improves route frequencies during the peak and mid-day, and also evening hours and on weekends. This proposed structure improves overall transit accessibility and travel time, even when transfers are required. The draft recommended network has the following benefits, as documented in the [Draft Recommendations Report](#):

- The proposed ATV network would triple the number of Alexandria residents with access to frequent (every 15 minute or less), all-day bus service from 40,000 today to 120,000 by 2030.
- The proposed ATV network would triple the number of low-income residents in Alexandria with access to frequent, all-day bus service from 4,000 (29%) today to nearly 13,000 (89%) by 2030. This means that 9 out of every 10 low-income residents in Alexandria could have access to a bus every 15 minutes or less, seven days per week.
- The proposed ATV network would nearly quadruple the number of minority residents in Alexandria with access to frequent, all-day bus service from 16,000 to nearly 63,000 by 2030.
- The proposed ATV network would greatly increase the usefulness of bus service during middays, evenings and weekends. The total amount of bus service provided on Saturdays and Sundays would increase by 37% and 71% by 2030 respectively, which will help provide shorter wait times and longer hours of service for weekend transit users such as service sector employees at hotels, restaurants, and stores.

A third round of public engagement is being held during fall 2019. This engagement is similar to Engagement Round 2, and includes:

- Two public workshops (October 15 and 24)
- ATC Board Public Hearing (November 13)
- One stakeholder workshop (October 10) with community representatives
- Project flyers in three languages (English, Spanish, Amharic)
- E-News and Social Media outreach
- Announcements and posters on DASH buses
- Posters at transit stops impacted by major service changes
- Neighborhood-specific information and customizable isochrone mapping tool available on project website
- Short ATV videos provide introduction and basic overview of project.
- Leadership briefings with ATC Board and Transportation Commission

- 23 “Pop-Up” events at various locations throughout the City, and Ride-Alongs on transit routes
- Meetings with more than 20 different civic / community groups, commissions, and associations, including those representing underrepresented groups such as seniors, persons with disabilities, minorities and persons with low incomes.
- Meeting with DASH bus drivers
- Online and hard copy surveys (available in both English / Spanish)

The stakeholder workshop resulted in the following input:

- 67% strongly agreed or agreed that the 2030 draft recommended network will be better than the existing network for the communities they represent
- 87% strongly agreed or agreed that the 2030 draft recommended network will be better than the existing network for the City of Alexandria as a whole
- 67% strongly agreed or agreed that the 2022 draft recommended network will be better than the existing network for the communities they represent
- 80% strongly agreed or agreed that the 2022 draft recommended network will be better than the existing network for the City of Alexandria as a whole

The project team has received both positive and negative public feedback on the draft recommended network. Residents of Parkfairfax have generally exhibited support for the draft recommended network as it has addressed many of the concerns that were voiced during the second round of engagement. Staff have also received support from many individual groups and community groups regarding the improved frequency of service and positive impact on improving accessibility for jobs and people, especially disadvantaged populations.

Most of the concerns have been related to the discontinuation of the AT2 in the Seminary Hill area of Central Alexandria, which is the largest area of the City seeing a recommended discontinuation of service. Approximately 95 riders per weekday, would be more than 1/8 mile from a transit stop under the proposal. More than 2/3 of these riders ride during the peak commuting hours. The project team is reviewing multiple options that would maintain some level of service along this segment of Seminary Road and Janneys Lane. Three options are being considered, including:

- Working with the Department of Defense (DoD) to allow 3 intermediate stops along the existing express route AT2X, which is funded by the DoD
- Retaining the Route AT2, with various options for service, including weekday peak period only with 30 minute headways; weekday peak at 30 minute headways and weekday mid-day with 60 minute headways; and 7 days with 30 minute peak headways on weekdays and 60 minute mid-day headways
- Developing a Demand Response Pilot program for the underserved area

These options could be implemented by either increasing the overall service levels and cost by 1-5%, or by reducing off-peak service frequencies on other routes in the recommended network, including the Eisenhower corridor (Route N1) or the Arlandria / Potomac Yard area (Routes N10 / N11).

The ATC Board held a public hearing at its November 13 meeting. The Board noted that the AT2 service is important to serving residents, especially disadvantaged residents, and provided guidance to staff to maintain weekday AT2 service at 30-minute headways during the peak and 60 minute headways mid-day. The Board also noted its desire to minimize fiscal impacts, and would like staff to provide cost impacts associated with reductions to Routes N1, N10 and N11 that would offset the cost of the reinstated AT2 service.

Staff will compile and review all feedback received to develop a final recommended network that will be presented to the ATC Board on December 11, at which time we anticipate the plan to be adopted. Near term service changes could begin as early as FY 2021. The project website can be found at www.dashbus.com/transitvision/.