

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 15, 2017

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: CARRIE SANDERS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 4 – FY 2018 INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORK PROGRAM
/ 2017 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION WORK PLAN

ISSUE: Update on the Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Work Program, and the 2017 Transportation Commission Work Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission (Commission) receive the update on the FY 2018 Interdepartmental Work Program, and the 2017 Transportation Commission Work Plan.

BACKGROUND: Each year, an Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program is brought to the Planning Commission and City Council for input to help inform development of the FY 2018 City Manager’s Proposed Operating Budget, scheduled to be released in late February 2017. A final Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program will be docketed for City Council approval in May 2017, after adoption of the FY 2017 Budget.

As in previous years, the City departments and agencies that are engaged in long range planning and plan implementation have collaboratively prepared a draft work program for the upcoming fiscal year (see Attachment 1). The draft work program includes new plans scheduled to begin in FY 2018, the completion of plans and studies now underway, and implementation of previously approved plans.

In addition to the Interdepartmental Work Program, at the beginning of each year, staff provides to the Transportation Commission a Work Plan for the calendar year that is reflective of the existing and proposed Interdepartmental Work Program, and also includes additional information on transportation programs, funding items, and regional projects. The Work Plan provides an indication to the Commission of the items that will be brought to them over the course of the calendar year, with anticipated decision points. The Transportation Commission Work Plan is a working document that is often changed during the course of the year, as project schedules change and other previously unanticipated items are added.

DISCUSSION:

Preparing the FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program

The work program coordinates the planning work programs of the Department of Planning and Zoning; the Department of Project Implementation; the Office of Housing; the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services; the Office of Historic Alexandria; and the Department of General Services, as well as the ongoing redevelopment activities of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). Potential work program elements are evaluated by the above departments with the City Manager's Office, the Department of Code Administration, Alexandria City Public Schools, the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and Visit Alexandria.

The proposed work program is intended to be complementary of the City Council's Strategic Plan, the interdepartmental nature of the planning program, and the resources needed to complete each project at the recommended level of effort on each project. As is usually the case, there is greater demand for work to be undertaken and completed than there are staff and available technical resources. The work program endeavors to balance demand for interdepartmental planning and development review with staff, community and City Council decision making capacity to do so, while also taking advantage of market opportunity and enabling future real estate tax base growth and developer contributions toward public benefits.

Evaluating Potential Planning Projects for FY 2018

Long range planning capacity (and the ability to engage in multiple large planning efforts at a time) is constrained by a variety of factors, chief among them staff capacity across multiple departments and budget resources for technical analysis. However, bandwidth for planning projects is also limited by decision-making capacity (senior City staff, various Commissions, and City Council), as well as the community's capacity to simultaneously engage in multiple planning processes.

For FY 2018 and beyond, staff evaluated the priority of potential projects based on community interests and objectives, timing opportunities and constraints, whether the project/area has already been postponed in the past, and the extent to which the project supports the City's strategic goals and objectives. What staff heard from the community over the course of the City Strategic Plan update process (now nearing completion with public hearing anticipated in January) also helped inform planning priorities for FY 2018 and beyond.

Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Work Program Items

The draft work program for FY 2018 represents a continuation and completion of projects begun in FY 2017 plus the addition of new projects. Major planning projects include completion of the Old Town North SAP Update (Line #5), North Potomac Yard SAP Update (Line #6), initiation of the Eisenhower East Phase 1 SAP update (Line #9), the Route 1 South Affordable Housing Strategy (Line #13) pending funding through a VHDA grant application, and Mount Vernon Avenue Pedestrian Safety Improvements and update to the Mt. Vernon Avenue Business Plan and Arlandria Action Plan (Line #15).

The attached bar chart and the attached list of project descriptions make clear that there is a very high volume of planning work that has been proposed – more than can be accommodated in the next two fiscal years. In order to tackle as much as possible, staff has identified opportunities to focus our efforts on each project to the core issues; for example, the Route 1 South study (Line #13) will focus on affordable housing, the very limited number of potential redevelopment sites, and streetscape and other pedestrian/bike safety improvements. The Mount Vernon Avenue

study (Line #15) originally envisioned as an update to the Del Ray and Arlandria Plans will now encompass and build upon the pedestrian safety improvements now under way. Grouping and sequencing the Mount Vernon Avenue work is an efficient approach, particularly because it involves the same stakeholders, staff and decision makers. It will also be important for the community to understand the scope of the proposed improvements before the next phase of the planning effort moves forward, so they may be taken into account when we engage the community early in a discussion of core issues that the plan should address.

Some long range planning projects, such as the Green Building Policy update (Line #69), are proposed for delay because existing resources (staff and funds for outside technical assistance) are insufficient for its inclusion in the FY2018 work program and competing projects have a higher priority. In this case, staff recommends focusing available resources on the update of the Environmental Action Plan (Line #14), which is the City's overarching environmental policy guidance, and using the results of that effort to guide the Green Building Policy Update when it can be scheduled. Currently, Alexandria's Green Building Policy is among the most environmentally advanced for a local government in the region and Alexandria regularly achieves near-total compliance with this Green Building Policy for new buildings.

2017 Transportation Commission Work Plan

The Transportation Commission Work Plan (Attachment 3) is a working document that provides an outline of the projects and programs that will be coming to the Transportation Commission over the course of the calendar year. It includes the transportation related projects and/ studies that have been identified in the FY 2018 Interdepartmental Work Program for the 2017 calendar year. In addition, it includes transportation funding related items (such as the budget process, and CMAQ / RSTP funding request), transportation programs (such as Complete Streets, parking, etc.), and regional projects that have an impact on the City's transportation system.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Bar Chart: Draft FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program
2. DRAFT FY 2018 Project Descriptions
3. 2017 Transportation Commission Work Plan