

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 28, 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. Funding Update:

On March 10, the Virginia General Assembly passed historic legislation to provide the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) with dedicated funding for capital needs. The legislation: includes \$154M annually for capital, requires additional fiscal oversight and reporting by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), mandates changes to the WMATA Board of Directors, and establishes a 3% cap on annual operating subsidy growth. The dedicated funding and reform items are contingent on Maryland and the District of Columbia enacting comparable legislation. Maryland became the third and final jurisdiction to commit its full share of funding (\$167M) on Friday, March 23.

If the current Virginia proposal holds, Alexandria would be directly impacted by the funding legislation in two ways: 1) the City must provide approximately \$4.3M annually to match other WMATA-funding jurisdictions' portion of the Commonwealth subsidy and 2) revenue from Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) 30% funds will be reduced by approximately \$2.2M annually when Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and Grantor's Tax revenue currently collected by NVTA will be transferred to NVTC and dedicated to WMATA capital. City staff is reviewing the legislation to determine the fiscal impact to the Proposed FY19 Operating Budget and FY19-28 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). City elected officials are also working with our regional counterparts to propose amendments to the current legislation that would lessen the impact to existing NVTA funding. On March 22, the NVTA agreed to send a letter to Governor Ralph Northam requesting the state use more money or raise local taxes to pay for the Metro bill, instead of using so much NVTA revenue.

The General Assembly also passed legislation establishing a floor on the gas tax. The additional gas tax revenue will be dedicated to: 1) WMATA for capital expenses only and 2) Virginia Railway Express (VRE) for operating and capital expenses.

The General Assembly did not take any action related to the Commonwealth transit capital fiscal cliff. It is anticipated that this issue will be re-visited during the General Assembly Short Session in early 2019.

B. Dockless Bike Share:

Having received preliminary expressions of interest from dockless bikeshare service providers, staff has begun researching options for regulating any potential dockless bikeshare deployment in the City of Alexandria. Primary considerations in crafting regulations or permit conditions will be derived from the experiences of other cities and lessons learned from the District of Columbia's ongoing pilot permit trial, which is set to expire in April, but will most likely be extended or renewed.

Staff has begun researching a regulatory framework under which the City could specify conditions of how dockless bikeshare providers could conduct business in Alexandria. When this research and the DC permit trial period have been evaluated, staff will develop a proposal for regulating dockless bikeshare in Alexandria that will be presented to the Transportation Commission for their review and comment.

C. Environmental Action Plan (EAP) Update:

On Saturday, March 10, the City of Alexandria hosted a public event called "Eco-City Café" as part of its update of the Eco-City Environmental Action Plan 2030. The EAP is the City's blueprint for creating a thriving and sustainable community. In June 2009, the City adopted the EAP, aimed at achieving the vision and principles outlined in the City's Eco-City Charter and ensuring the City continues to move toward environmental sustainability.

The process for updated the EAP involves the participation of City residents, businesses, staff and the Environmental Policy Commission. The Café was an important opportunity for these stakeholders to discuss the plan and offer input and feedback. The event featured small group discussions of five key focus areas: Global Climate, Energy and Green Building; Land Use and Open Space; Solid Waste; Water Resources; and Transportation. Although the Transportation chapter will be addressed in a future phase of the EAP update, City staff believed it was important to talk about the progress of the transportation sector since the approval of the 2009 EAP and receive feedback from the different stakeholders.

The objective of the discussion at the Transportation table was to receive stakeholder input on short, medium and long-term actions that the city should consider in the face of the Transportation chapter update to the EAP. Some of these highlights include:

1. Improving active transportation infrastructure has a great potential to reduce motor vehicle trips. The city should take into consideration the following issues:
 - a. Complete and properly connect Alexandria's multi-use trail network to encourage active transportation
 - b. Periodically maintain and repair bike lanes and paths (from debris & snow)
 - c. Improve traffic signal timing
 - i. Optimize signal timing at certain intersections based on *pedestrian* counts, and not vehicle counts
 - ii. Periodic observation of intersection crossing habits
 - iii. Extra attention to crossings where those with mobility issues may congregate

2. Inform Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) drivers who want to reduce carbon footprint of their options
 - a. SOV driving constitutes the vast majority of existing trips
 - b. There will always be some SOV drivers, no matter what city does
3. City fleet electrification
 - a. Electric vehicles (EVs) in City fleets could make an impact on air pollution goals (DASH buses, ACPS school buses, motor pool fleet)
 - b. Accelerate DASH and school bus electrification
4. Optimizing transit routes
 - a. Improve reliability and frequency of bus services as a way to attract trips from SOV motorists
 - b. Consider utilization of smaller buses with higher frequencies and higher occupancies
5. Managing regional trips
 - a. Work with other jurisdictions on incentives and disincentives for mode choice
 - b. Potential congestion pricing for through trips in Alexandria
6. Improve fare and physical integration between WMATA and city/local buses

D. Route 1 South Affordable Housing:

In May 2017, City Council adopted its FY 2018 Interdepartmental Long-Range Planning Work Program, which includes the Route 1 South Housing Affordability Strategy planning effort focused on a portion of the Southwest Quadrant Small Area around Route 1 south of Duke Street. The timing of this effort is closely tied to the expiration of affordability contracts on two large rental communities in the corridor – the Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III. This initiative is exploring opportunities to maintain housing affordability in the plan area through the future preservation, renovation and/or redevelopment of these properties. Working with the community and commercial property owners, this planning effort will develop strategies and identify public and private resources and tools to preserve housing affordability and diversity, including existing expiring long-term subsidies that provide deep affordability for many of the rental units. It will also explore strategies to strengthen the character of the neighborhood, prioritize safety and accessibility along Route 1 South, and create a more welcoming gateway to the city.

This planning process included a five-day intensive community planning “charrette” - a collaborative planning and design exercise to develop the principles and strategies for the plan. Members of the community were invited to participate and share their ideas on-site during the day and at evening public meetings and open houses

During the Charrette, City staff received input from the community regarding existing issues related to pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Using such input, staff has begun identifying potential short medium term solutions to improve mobility and circulation around the project area as well as possible long term solutions to be funded through development. Some of the measures staff under consideration are: installing a High Intensity Activated Cross Walk (HAWK) signal in the intersection of Franklin and Alfred Streets, utilizing curb extension (paint or concrete), and improvement the visibility of some crosswalks. City Staff also suggested evaluating Lead Pedestrian Intervals (LPI), and restriping options to provide pedestrian refuges on Route 1.