

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 17, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: CHRISTOPHER ZIEMANN, DIVISION CHIEF, TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 6 – ALEXANDRIA TRANSIT VISION PLAN

ISSUE: Consideration of staff summary and public comment on the Alexandria Transit Vision (ATV) Plan and two draft bus network redesign concepts.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission receive the update on the ATV Plan, hold a public hearing and take under consideration any feedback received from the public hearing, and be prepared to provide a recommendation on the “Ridership vs. Coverage” balance percentage at the next Transportation Commission meeting on May 15th.

BACKGROUND: The Alexandria Transit Vision (ATV) Plan is a joint effort by DASH and the City of Alexandria to redesign the Alexandria bus network from scratch based on current/future transit demand and community transit priorities. The plan is anticipated to be completed in winter 2019.

A joint Transportation Commission / Alexandria Transit Company (ATC) Board meeting was held on February 13, 2019 to provide an overview of the project and discuss two draft transit network concepts, including a “Ridership” concept, and a “Coverage” concept. These two distinct concepts illustrate two different approaches for future network design, and represent different points on the transit network design spectrum between “Ridership” and “Coverage” goals. “Ridership”-oriented service seeks to maximize ridership, increase farebox revenues and reduce subsidies, reduce congestion and promote sustainability by allocating more service to high-density, transit-friendly corridors. “Coverage” -oriented service provides geographic coverage to wider areas so that people in more areas have access to at least some bus service, but the service is often infrequent and less productive.

DASH and City staff are currently conducting the second round of ATV public engagement to receive input on the two concepts.

DISCUSSION: Over the winter, City and DASH staff have conducted an extensive civic engagement campaign to present the two network options and receive feedback. This outreach included:

- Three public workshops (March 5, 6, 7)
- One stakeholder workshop (Feb 26) with several dozen community representatives
- Leadership briefings with Council, ATC Board and Transportation Commission
- 12 “Pop-Up” Events at various locations throughout the City
- Meetings with various 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 Survey (MetroQuest) and hard copy version, both available in both English / Spanish

The stakeholder workshop resulted in the following highlights:

- 81% support additional service, even if it meant paying for it in taxes or fees
- 73% prefer the ridership concept and 14% prefer the coverage concept
- 50% strongly prefer the ridership concept
- The top 3 priorities for stakeholders during the meeting polling were:
 - More frequency on weekday midday and evenings
 - More frequency on weekday peak times
 - More frequency on weekends

Approximately 1,200 persons filled out either the Online MetroQuest survey or hard copy survey. The survey results showed the following:

- 91% showed support for increased investment in transit
- The transit priorities that were most heavily supported by respondents include the following in priority order.
 - Buses come more often
 - Consistent routes all day
 - More weekend service
- Other general themes that were identified:
 - There is concern for the removal and/or re-alignment of specific routes, including those around North Ridge and Parkfairfax.
 - There is strong support for increased frequency at all times of days.
 - Respondents want to see buses running full.
 - There is support for increased spending if it results in the reduction of traffic and/or of single occupancy vehicles. This was generally mentioned in combination with the desire for dedicated bus lanes which increase transit speed.
 - While generally supportive of increased spending, respondents have mixed opinions of the source of the money (fares, taxes, or other city budgets).

The ATV Plan will involve one more round of civic engagement in the fall of 2019 to ensure that concerns and ideas of the Alexandria community are heard, recognized and incorporated into the development of a future transit network

Over the next two months, the ATC Board of Directors and the City’s Transportation Commission will be providing specific guidance to DASH and City staff on the design parameters and investment levels for the final draft network for the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan (ATV).

Process, Timeline and Next Steps

DASH and City staff have developed the following process and schedule.

	Docket Item	Transportation Commission	ATC Board of Directors
Second Round of ATV Outreach	Review/Adoption of Formal ATV Decision-Making Process	-	April 10, 2019 (Action Item)
	Project Update, Outreach Summary & Public Hearing	April 17, 2019	May 8, 2019
	Recommendation/Adoption of Final Network Parameters	May 15, 2019 (Action Item)	June 12, 2019 (Action Item – CRITICAL DECISION POINT)
Final Round of ATV Outreach	Joint Work Session for Final ATV Draft Network	Sept/Oct 2019	Sept/Oct 2019
	Public Hearing for Final ATV Draft Network	Oct/Nov 2019	November 2019 (CRITICAL DECISION POINT)
	Final Recommendation/Adoption of ATV Final Network	Nov/Dec 2019 (Action Item)	December 2019 (Action Item)

The questions that will be formally posed to the Transportation Commission (May 15) and ATC Board of Directors (June 12) include the following:

1. What is the appropriate balance between the “Ridership” and “Coverage” concepts for the future Alexandria bus network?

2. What is the appropriate level of investment for the final Alexandria Transit Vision Plan?
3. What is the appropriate level of investment for the Short-Term Implementation Plan for the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan?

For the “Ridership vs. Coverage” question, the ATC Board of Directors has the final decision-making authority since the question directly relates to bus service levels and bus network design. The Transportation Commission will be asked to provide a recommendation for this question at its May 15, 2019 meeting prior to the ATC Board meeting where this question will be finalized. DASH and City staff will also provide staff guidance on this question to both bodies, which will be based on feedback received from the community and professional judgment.

For the two questions relating to level of investment, the Transportation Commission and ATC Board of Directors will both be asked to approve recommendations for specific service level increases. DASH and City staff will also provide guidance on these questions, which may help inform the final recommendations. The ultimate discretion over decisions relating to future operations funding, however, will be determined by City Council through their annual budget process.