

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2020

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 6 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. DASH Electric Bus Launch Event

The Alexandria Transit Company (DASH) is unveiling its new zero-emissions battery electric buses on Monday, October 19th at 12:30PM. The event will introduce electric buses to the DASH fleet making it a historic first for the agency, the City of Alexandria and the Northern Virginia region.

Governor Northam, Transportation Secretary Valentine, and Mayor Wilson are speaking at the event.

To promote distance and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, the event will be broadcast live to DASH's Facebook page (@DASHbus).

B. Ad Hoc Scooter Task Force

City Council approved the Phase II Pilot for 2020 and the creation of an Ad Hoc Scooter Task Force in December 2019 to provide guidance to staff on shared mobility and determine next steps for the dockless program.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held virtually via Zoom on September 21, 2020. During the meeting, the Task Force discussed their recommendation to extend the pilot through 2021 to allow staff time to engage with the Task Force and the community through outreach events. Staff planned to engage with the Task Force and the community through outreach events in 2020 but were unable due to the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. Staff plans to bring the Dockless Mobility Program to City Council's November 24th Legislative Meeting for consideration of the extension of the Phase II Pilot for 2021. If the Pilot is extended, staff would meet with the Task Force in 2021 to discuss the future of the dockless program.

In 2020, five companies were permitted with the City and paid a total of \$125,000 in permit fees. Alexandrians took approximately 55,000 trips on scooters through mid-September 2020. With the Phase II Pilot, operators are required to deploy 30% of their fleet in equity areas and scooter companies are required to deploy in a corral if one is nearby. On January 1, 2020, City Code changes approved by Council in December 2019 went into effect, such as scooter and e-bicycle usage being subject to traffic laws and a sidewalk riding ban. Throughout 2020, staff installed “no sidewalk riding” signage throughout the City, installed additional scooter parking corrals and are planning more scooter corrals for the West End, and developed an educational City Code pamphlet for APD to share with riders.

C. WMATA Items

WMATA Service and Budget

Recently, the WMATA board formally voted on the October 13, 2020 public hearing docket for a FY 2021 budget amendment to close a \$210 million budget gap. These service changes include a mix of rail and bus strategies that would start in January 2021. These include:

- Continuing the current bus service plan, a reduction of 25% from pre-COVID levels, that began August 23, 2020 through the end of FY21
- Collecting bus fares on Metrobus starting Jan 1, 2020
- Reducing most rail lines to 12-minute headways
- Closing rail at 9 PM on weekdays
- Eliminating turnback service on Red and Yellow rail lines
- Deferring the opening of Silver Line Phase II to July 2021

Given budget projections for FY22, this level of service will likely be a baseline with additional cuts anticipated. **As the bus cuts will be in place for over one year, they would be considered permanent and *may* not come back in the same form.**

For Alexandria, the following bus routes were eliminated due to COVID-19 cut-backs and **will continue to no longer be provided**: 7W (but extended 7A/F), 8S, 8W, 8Z, 10E, 11Y, 21A, 21D, 22C. There will also be no NH2 weekend service.

The following routes will continue to have **reduced service**: Metroway (20-minute headways), 22A (1-hour headways), 22F (30-minute headways).

The public comment period will be open until 9 a.m. October 19. An [online survey](#) is available that includes questions about whether the respondent has ridden bus or rail in the past week, whether the cuts impacts them personally, and whether the cuts are acceptable on a temporary basis.

As per Council discussion on the topic on October 6, the City is planning to submit a letter during the public comment period for options to provide service on the 8Z and 21A, where alternatives are more limited and more costly, and where there is a higher share of low-income and minority populations.

The WMATA board will be reviewing feedback and voting for the changes in November.

Potomac Yard-VT

On September 22, Council unanimously voted to recommend that the WMATA board approve the name “Potomac Yard-VT” for the new Metrorail station. The WMATA board is currently set to vote on the name before the end of the year.

Arlington Cemetery Shutdown

On September 22, Council voted to submit a letter to General Manager Paul Weidenfeld supporting WMATA’s proposed rail mitigation for the Arlington Cemetery station, reserving the right to request additional shuttles as situations change over the next several months.

Long-Term Metrorail Closures

On October 8, the WMATA board received a presentation on upcoming capital projects that will result in temporary system closures over the next few years. In terms of impacts for Alexandria, Metro is planning for a shutdown of the Yellow Line Bridge in the Summer of 2022. The exact nature of the shutdown will be determined next year.

D. NVTA Items

NVTA’s Technical Advisory Committee ([TAC](#)); Planning Coordination Advisory Committee ([PCAC](#)); and Planning and Programming Committee ([PPC](#)), all reconvened in September to discuss updates on NVTA analysis on “COVID 19: Transportation Impacts and Opportunities” and the Authority’s travel trend monitoring, **as well as** Northern Virginia's long-range transportation plan -- TransAction -- Vision and Goals.

COVID 19: Transportation Impacts and Opportunities

- Regional Travel Trend Monitoring: Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) data presented at the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), Sept. 16, 2020:
 - Truck traffic back to pre-COVID levels across the Commonwealth of Virginia
 - Across the Commonwealth, traffic volumes are within 15% of pre-COVID levels on average; NoVA is 20%
 - Weekend travel seems to be recovering faster than weekday travel
 - Average speed on roadways continue to be higher than pre-COVID levels during AM and PM hours
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Finance & Capital Committee Meeting, Sept. 10, 2020:
 - Gradual recovery of Metro ridership, but bus ridership has increased over rail ridership
- Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) data for FY2020 shows:
 - Rail ridership is lower than bus travel in region
 - Slight uptick in Metrorail and Metro Bus services but Virginia Railway Express (VRE) isn’t on the rise just yet
- Greater Washington Partnership Capital COVID Snapshot (August 2020 survey; encompasses DMV, Baltimore and Richmond): Following finding is quite significant and relevant to scenario analysis NVTA conducted:

- For employers with a return to work plan, more than **20 percent of the workforce could be teleworking full-time**. If true of the D.C. region, this would represent a 15 percentage point increase compared to the roughly 5 percent of the region's workforce that teleworked prior to COVID-19.

TransAction Vision and Goals

Three committees discussed the draft revisions to the TransAction Vision and Goals, which were developed by a committee of jurisdiction and agency staff from across the region. The proposed vision statement reads:

“Northern Virginia will plan for, and invest in, a sustainable and integrated multimodal transportation system that enhances the quality of life, strengthens the economy, and builds resilience.”

- **Three Goals of TransAction Update:**
 - Improve Mobility
 - Increase Accessibility
 - Build Resiliency

NOVA Gateway

The TAC saw a demonstration of the [NoVA Gateway](#), a newly launched tool that provides real-time status updates for NVTA-funded transportation projects.

E. Duke Street BRT Project Update

On October 6, 2020 City Council approved a grant application for \$3.5 million to fund the operation of the Duke Street BRT project in FY 2027 that the Transportation Commission endorsed in September. Over the past 15 years, staff has been following Council direction to pursue opportunities to move more people to jobs by implementing the three BRT corridors in the City. Over the summer, staff began developing a community engagement plan to re-vision the Duke Street Corridor. While the 2012 Transitway Feasibility Study made recommendations as to the design of this corridor, staff will be reengaging with the community to ensure that this project is flexible in the design to meet the needs of people today. This will be an extended engagement process to ensure equity in outreach and that all relevant stakeholders are able to participate and provide input on the corridor design. Engagement with the community will likely begin in early 2021 and continue for an 18-month period. Staff is presenting the engagement plan to City Council this fall and will bring forward a plan that incorporates their comments as an update to the Transportation Commission later in 2020.

F. Complete Streets Outreach

Resurfacing streets provides an opportunity to upgrade elements of the roadway to better accommodate people of all ages and abilities. For all streets, the goal is to improve safety, accessibility, and mobility. The City typically collects community input once per year for streets that are scheduled to be repaved. This community input is collected via online feedback forms for each street, which are advertised collectively through Alexandria eNews. Additionally, the

community feedback form is sent to other stakeholder groups including civic associations, school staff, and others as applicable. The results are posted to the [Complete Streets Repaving website](#).

For the Commonwealth Avenue Complete Streets project, the repaving feedback form was promoted via eNews along with six other streets that were on the repaving schedule. Staff typically use this input, along with other factors such as crash history, existing plans and recommendations, equity considerations, project feasibility, and resource availability to determine the extent of the improvements needed for a given street. Some streets receive standard improvements, such as crosswalk restriping or ADA ramp upgrades, which do not warrant additional community feedback. However, projects that include more substantial work could warrant additional community engagement, which is conducted on a more targeted basis. For Commonwealth Avenue, additional input opportunities on the project design were shared on the project website as well as directly with multiple civic associations, school staff, Parent-Teacher Associations, and adjacent institutional groups such as houses of worship and daycare facilities.