

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 8 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. COVID Mobility Updates

On-Street Dining and Retail Areas (Parklets) in Parking Spaces – In order to provide some additional outdoor dining and retail areas for restaurants and retail shops, staff has used the parklet program the Traffic and Parking Board reviewed earlier this year and the King Street Outdoor Dining program to create an approval process for these types of requests. These spaces will be permitted for use by specific restaurants and retail uses similar to outdoor dining approvals for sidewalks. These spaces are temporary. At this time, they are approved through Thanksgiving, although the City Manager could extend this approval if needed. More information about this program is provided at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=6702>

Curbside Pickup – To accommodate the increase in takeout and deliveries, staff created a process that allowed businesses to request parking spaces outside of their establishment to be temporarily signed for curbside pickup areas. These spaces are intended to be used for short term parking to allow patrons to quickly park and pick up an order from a business. A map of the locations where this signage has been installed can be found online at:

<https://geoportal.alexandriava.gov/portal/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=27b387900de748679013fd25c6ba39cc&extent=-77.0788,38.7928,-77.0241,38.8371>

Closure of 100 block of King Street - In coordination with a request from Old Town Business Association for additional area for outdoor dining and the need for additional pedestrian space on lower King Street, staff temporarily closed the 100 block of King Street to vehicular traffic at the end of May. This plan was modified from the King Street Place design that was discussed in the Fall 2019. The center of the street (22 feet in width) remains unobstructed to allow for emergency vehicle access if needed (pedestrians are allowed to walk in this area). The sidewalks

and parking lanes are available for restaurants and retail shops to use for outdoor dining and retail uses through a permit process. These areas are cordoned off to define specific individual areas. Each end of the block is blocked to through traffic by traffic barriers. Overall, staff has received positive feedback about this temporary measure and is working with the businesses to extend this closure through the end of the year.

B. Potomac Yard-VT

In spring 2020, Virginia Tech expressed its interest to the City in changing of the name of the “Potomac Yard” Metro station to include reference to the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus. Between May and July 2020, the City conducted outreach to 25 groups located or with vested interest in activity within a one-half mile radius of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. Aside from the FTA, which will not take a position, all written feedback including from the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, developers in the area, a large employer, and a member of the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee supported the proposal.

On September 8, 2020, Council voted to defer a vote on a resolution for the WMATA board to approve “Potomac Yard-VT” as the official station name for the new station in Potomac Yard to September 22.

If approved by Council, WMATA will then conduct a market survey to determine public perception of multiple aspects of the proposed name change. This information will then be reviewed by WMATA and the City before a final determination is made whether to submit the request to the WMATA Board of Directors for approval.

C. Arlington Cemetery Closure

WMATA’s Platform Improvement Project is a multi-year effort to improve the safety of platforms at 20 exterior stations with significant deterioration due to exposure to weather and the agents used during de-icing. This effort is being conducted in four phases. The first phase was the closure of six stations south of National Airport on the Blue and Yellow lines, impacting Alexandria during the summer of 2019. The second phase is being conducted during the summer of 2020 with the closure of four stations at the end of the Orange Line, which is not impacting normal travel in Alexandria. Phase 3, planned for mid-February 2021 to mid-May 2021, includes the Arlington Cemetery Station. This period was selected because it is a lower ridership period for the Phase 3 stations and it avoids the major events held at Arlington Cemetery. With the closure of Arlington Cemetery, trains cannot travel through the station, requiring rail riders to transfer at L’Enfant Station to travel to Blue Line stations in Arlington or the District of Columbia.

To mitigate the impact of the Arlington Cemetery Station closure, WMATA is planning to run both Blue and Yellow Line service across the Yellow Line Bridge, enabling riders from Van Dorn to remain on the Blue Line. It will also reduce wait times for service across the Yellow Line Bridge. Additional shuttle options are currently under consideration. On September 22, Council will be considering whether to send a letter to the WMATA General Manager on the matter.

D. SMART SCALE Applications

After submitting pre-applications for five projects in Spring 2020, staff submitted four final applications for the following projects:

Upper King Street Multimodal Reconstruction	\$39,928,069
Route 1 and East Glebe Intersection Improvements	\$2,426,451
Route 1 South Median Refuge Island	\$3,487,164
Landmark Mall Transit Center	\$12,997,054

The City did not move forward with the application for the Duke Street Transitway because NVTa awarded funding for this project over the summer. All of these application amounts are below the Council-approved amounts.

E. Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa) Funding

In July, the NVTa unanimously [adopted the FY2020-2025 Six Year Program](#), which included the City's full request of \$75 million dollars for the Duke Street Transitway. The City previously received \$12 million from NVTa for planning and design of this corridor, which is expected to begin this fall. While the City approved concept plans during the 2012 Feasibility Study, staff will be working with the community to re-envision Duke Street and determine how enhanced transit can be accommodated along this corridor. The first phase of this project will include funding for additional buses, shelters and amenities, and some roadway design improvements. The corridor design will be determined in partnership with the community over the next year.

Overall, [21 of the 41 multimodal transportation projects](#) submitted for funding consideration, received regional funding from the Authority. The public can now view and download each of the [21 adopted projects and description forms](#), complete with funding information, total project cost, project milestones, and analysis highlights. You can also view the [Project Funding Table](#) which lists all multimodal projects the Authority is funding through its five funding programs.

F. DRPT Funding

The Covid-19 pandemic has seriously reduced the Commonwealth's transportation resources. The latest financial forecasts show the Commonwealth will lose \$750 million in transportation funds over the next two years. Because of the uncertainty regarding resources, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has not passed a full Six Year Improvement Plan for FY 2021 – FY 2026. The CTB is expected to meet September 15-16 and will approve an extension of the operating assistance for local transit services and WMATA for one quarter at the same level that was provided last year.

G. WMATA Service and Budget

Metro ridership has drastically reduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic. After reducing service, WMATA increased bus service in late August 2020 to a level which is 75% of the service provided pre-Covid-19. Rail service is approximately 90% of pre-Covid-19 levels. This summer, bus ridership increased from about a 77% reduction from 2019 levels in June to 65% of 2019 levels in August. Rail ridership has increased slightly from a 91% reduction from 2019 levels in June to 87% in August.

WMATA has done extensive work during the summer on its system to take advantage of the lower ridership. The Silver Line was started up August 16th, after being shut down earlier in the year because of problems connecting the new portion of the Silver Line to the old portion. WMATA reopened the Arlington Cemetery and East Falls Church stations on August 17th. WMATA reopened the Vienna and Dunn Loring stations on September 9th after completing platform improvement work at these stations.

Due to lower ridership than anticipated post-Covid, WMATA now anticipates that it will have a budget shortfall in FY 2021. On September 16, the WMATA board is slated to approve a public hearing docket of potential service cuts to address the budget shortfall. These cuts include weekday headways of generally 12-minutes, reduced rail span of service, August level of service on bus routes through the end of FY21, and collecting fares on buses starting in Q3. The WMATA Finance and Capital Committee presentation from September 10 can be found [here](#).