

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 18, 2016

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #7 – POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

ISSUE: Approval of the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) and associated zoning approvals for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission recommend to the Planning Commission and City Council approval of the DSUP and associated zoning approvals for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

BACKGROUND: Potomac Yard represents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities for the City with the potential to achieve the vision for an urban mix of uses near transit. The construction of a Metrorail station has been the center of discussion in regard to transportation and land use planning for Potomac Yard for many years, most recently in the adopted 2008 Citywide Transportation Master Plan and the 2010 North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan.

In 2011, the City of Alexandria initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for construction of the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. The lead Federal agency for the EIS has been the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City has been the project co-lead and sponsor. WMATA and the National Park Service (NPS) have been cooperating agencies. As part of this process, a Draft EIS was released for public review and comment in spring 2015. City Council selected Alternative B as the preferred alternative on May 20, 2015.

DISCUSSION: Since selection of the preferred alternative, staff have been working to complete the Final EIS and are at the same time developing the conceptual design for incorporation into the DSUP application as well as the documents required for the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the design-build contract that is expected to be advertised in summer 2016.

The Final EIS is expected to be released for public review by mid-June 2016. Any new, substantive comments received will be addressed in the Record of Decision (ROD) issued by the FTA, which is the lead federal agency. The NPS will also issue a ROD. The RODs are expected in summer 2016.

Since fall 2015, WMATA and City staff have been developing the conceptual design for the station,

as well as the set of standards, requirements, and expectations that the design-build contractors will use to develop their bids. The design process has included a series of meetings to solicit public input, as well as regular meetings with the Board of Architectural Review and the Park and Recreation Commission, and monthly updates to City Council. The design has also included input from staff of the NPS, the Commission on Fine Arts, and the National Capital Planning Commission.

Alternative B as approved by City Council includes two entrances. The northern entrance would serve Potomac Yard, while at the southern end there would be entrances to Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens, connected by a pedestrian/bicycle bridge between the two neighborhoods. The exact location of the northern entrance will be determined in coordination with the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan Update that is currently underway. On the Potomac Yard side, the southern entrance is aligned with East Glebe Road, to facilitate access to the station and make use of existing pedestrian signals. On the Potomac Greens side, the entrance is at the northern end of the neighborhood, along the western edge of Potomac Greens Park. All entrances will include significant bicycle parking. Any bus access will use the northern entrance. There will be no kiss-and-ride or park-and-ride facilities provided, as the primary modes of access for this station are anticipated to be walking and biking.

Residents in Potomac Greens, Old Town Greens, and Potomac Yard have expressed concern that Metrorail riders will utilize neighborhood streets to park. It is likely that residents will choose to institute residential permit parking to alleviate this concern. In addition, residents have expressed concerns about traffic impacts from riders being dropped off at the station – this includes residents of Lynhaven who are concerned about impacts to the intersection of East Glebe Road and Route 1. The traffic analysis performed as part of the EIS does not show the station generating a significant amount of automobile traffic; however, the analysis does show a degradation in Level of Service at East Glebe Road and Route 1. Since that analysis was performed, the City has completed the Route 1 / Oakville Triangle Corridor Plan, which includes a number of projects intended to improve the performance of that intersection. The traffic analysis performed as part of the Oakville Triangle plan showed that these projects would result in improved transportation network performance.

Overall, the addition of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard will enhance the transportation network in the Route 1 corridor by adding a regional connection to the Metrorail system which will provide an attractive alternative to the automobile for regional trips. It will also support the development of the densities and mix of uses in Potomac Yard that create a walkable and bikeable community for daily needs.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment 1 - Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Site Plan