



**City of Alexandria**  
Transportation Commission

**Regular Meeting**

November 20, 2019  
7:00 p.m.  
Council Workroom

**MINUTES**

**Commissioners Present:** Chairman Stephen Klejst, Vice-Chair Melissa McMahon, Commissioner Bruce Marsh, Commissioner Casey Kane, Commissioner Oscar Gonzalez, Commissioner John Goebel, Commissioner Carolyn Schroeder, Commissioner Alyia Gaskins, Commissioner Jake Jakubek.

**Staff Present:** Christopher Ziemann - Transportation Planning Division Chief; Jennifer Slesinger - Transportation Planning Division; Steve Sindiong – Transportation Planning Division, Sharese Thomas - Transportation Planning Division, Jose Ayala – Department of Planning & Zoning.

Presentation is available online:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/TransportationCommission>

Chairman Klejst called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**1. Public Comment Period**

Liz Kane, an Alexandria resident and representative of the Virginia Theological Seminary on Seminary Road, supports the DASH Board's recommendation not to eliminate the AT2 service until further options are explored. Ms. Kane requested that the City's goals of providing better and more frequent service to the higher density neighborhoods not come at the expense of eliminating public transportation to individuals off Seminary Road. There are many low-income riders on Seminary Hill, including students. Despite having implemented a new program for assistance, there are still many students who need assistance. A petition was put together by fifty students and submitted to the DASH Board requesting not to eliminate the AT2 service. In addition, there are other low-income riders coming into the corridor who rely on the AT2 service. In closing, Ms. Kane asked that the Commission delay passing the AT2 proposal until further options are explored.

Roy Byrd, an Alexandria resident and President of Clover College Park Civic Association, supports the DASH Board's recommendation to keep the AT2. The Association's concern is twofold: First, it is the only place where there is public transportation located in Central

Alexandria. Second, it would affect ridership from Yale Drive to West Taylor Run located near the Civic Association. More importantly for those individuals who use that location, the only other option would be Duke Street. Given the traffic safety concerns on Duke Street this not a good option.

Jim Durham, an Alexandria resident who resides on Fort Williams Parkway requested that the Commission concur with the ATC Board's direction that the proposed plan be updated with continued service in the Seminary-Janneys corridor for these reasons:

- The plan did not account for the numbers of low-income riders who use the AT2 bus in this corridor, such as cafeteria staffs at both the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) and St Stephens St Agnes School (SSSAS) and day care and pre-schools in this corridor. These are people who depend on the bus service but are not often able to attend public hearings.
- There are multiple reasons to expect increased ridership in this corridor, compared to when ridership was measured in Spring 2018 including improvements to biking, walking and Metrorail.

He asks that the Commission endorse the shift to more frequent service in high density areas without eliminating service in a corridor with proven ridership, that includes low-income riders with few other options.

## **2. October Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Kane asked for a correction to Action Item #4. Vice-Chair McMahon made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and Commissioner Marsh seconded the motion. Motion carries with Commissioner Jakubek abstaining due to his excused absence.

## **3. Commissioner Updates**

**Commissioner Schroeder:** During the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) meeting on November 18, there was discussion about SMART SCALE and providing a letter of support. Commissioner Schroeder will report back to the EPC on SMART SCALE discussion held by the Transportation Commission. A group of young school children has been working hard to propose policy changes for remediation in the schools.

**Commissioner Marsh:** On Tuesday, November 19, The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group met (PYMIG). The City is still working on the cost estimates for the various entrance scenarios. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approved the final permit for the station. Some preliminary construction has begun on the AC switch gear building on the side of the Metro and in the Potomac Greens neighborhood in terms of allowing easy access for the construction trucks. In addition, a parking lot was prepared for workers. Bob Garbacz, Division Chief of Traffic Engineering spoke at the PYMIG about the improvements that will be made at the intersections of Slaters Lane and Potomac Greens Avenue. Because of the additional traffic they are working on trying to figure out exactly what improvements to make.

**Commissioner Kane:** The Traffic and Parking Board has been closely involved in the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Project and have removed several parking spaces throughout the project area along the Potomac Greens area as well as Potomac Avenue to facilitate the new parking lot that has been constructed. On October 28, the Traffic and Parking Board approved the amendments to the Residential Parking Program that will go to City Council for approval. The Board reduced several

posted parking restrictions and did not change permit fees. Staff is also creating a more straightforward process to establish new Residential Parking Permit (RPP) Districts. Residents will now be allowed to request a new RPP area in anticipation of any parking issues. During the November 18 Traffic and Parking Board meeting, the Board approved a new hawk signal on Braddock Road by Minnie Howard Middle School. Additionally, the Board has requested the City to add a crosswalk to address the cut through of traffic on Princess Street off West Street, at the end of Princess as you get closer to the Metro Linear Park. Also, a stop sign was installed at Eisenhower Avenue off Dock and Port Streets to address cut through traffic.

**Commissioner Gaskins:** The Alexandria Mobility Plan Subcommittee met on October 23. A robust discussion was focused on debriefing the Innovation Summit, and proposed changes and recommendations for community outreach and surveys that are being used at the pop-up events and other engagements. The most intriguing part of the last discussion started with what the subcommittee needed the plan to be. The Advisory Committee reached consensus around using the plan as a tool to prioritize some of the current policies that have been established through Complete Streets and Vision Zero. During the next meeting on December 4, the Advisory Committee will hear some of the updates from the upcoming outreach. In addition, staff will provide an update on how the Advisory Committee's recommendations are being applied throughout the process.

**Chairman Klejst:** The DASH Board held a public meeting on November 13, the focus was to receive input on the Alexandria Transit Vision (ATV) Proposal. A significant number of individuals spoke about their concern for potentially eliminating the service along the current AT2 line. Essentially the proposal has left a gap in the middle of the City that would eliminate residents from having access to public transportation. There are also transit dependent populations who will be adversely impacted, such as hospital workers that utilize the DASH system along with the medical office buildings located at Kenmore and Seminary.

#### **4. Action Item: Alexandrian Transit Vision Study**

Steve Sindiong, Principal Planner, Transportation Planning, presented an update on the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan (ATV). The ATV Plan is a joint effort by the City of Alexandria and DASH to redesign the Alexandria bus network based on current and future transit demand and community transit priorities. The draft recommended network was developed based on public input during Spring 2019 of two draft network concepts that represented different points on the transit network design spectrum between "Ridership" and "Coverage" goals. In addition to policy guidance from both the Transportation Commission and ATC Board on appropriate balance between "ridership-oriented" service and "coverage-oriented" service, and the appropriate levels of service for 2022 and 2030.

Staff is requesting that the Transportation Commission consider and support the draft recommended ATV networks for both 2022 and 2030.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked if staff looked at bus speeds and asked how slow service is incorporated in the study. Staff did make a few assumptions in terms of improving speed on the bus rapid transit corridors: Duke Street, West End Transit, and the Route 1 Metro Railway. In addition, the new adaptive traffic control program would be implemented throughout the City. Commissioner Gonzalez also asked if physical accessibility to bus stops was part of the study. Staff confirmed that physical accessibility was not a part of the study because it is a separate item that staff is continually

working on through the Complete Streets Program, the City's Bus Shelter Program and other efforts.

Commissioner Kane reaffirmed that the Commission did ask staff to investigate the physical accessibility of bus shelters if they were located within 1/8 of mile from a bus stop. Staff confirmed that the consultants did a network analysis.

Commissioner Gaskins asked what staff's timing is in analyzing the information regarding accessibility and other improvements that are occurring parallel to transit stops and bike facilities. In addition, there was a representative from the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) at the Innovation Summit who discussed safety and accessibility issues of walking to some of the bus stops. Staff stated that accessibility to bus stops in general is a pedestrian accessibility issue that the City addresses through the Complete Streets Program. When staff is reviewing an area, they do give careful consideration when a bus stop is present. Commissioner Gonzalez asked if it is going to be a Transportation Commission issue or a DASH issue in terms of looking at bus stop accessibility location improvements. Commissioner Klejst confirmed that the Commission would develop the policy direction for the City and the City would direct DASH.

Commissioner Marsh asked how the 2022 plan coordinates the fiscal impact with the bus fleet. Staff responded that DASH has confirmed the acquisition of new buses that will be able to serve the 2022 network during the peak period.

Commissioner Gaskins stated that she understands why the N1 is being considered for reduction in service, given the ridership along the N10 and N11 in addition to the goals for prioritizing low income populations. But how were these two routes selected as potential contenders for reduction in service. Staff looked at other routes that better met the goals of the project and the City.

Commissioner Kane asked what the cost would be to implement the AT2 service. Staff stated that DASH investigated the options of weekday thirty-minute peak and sixty-minute midday weekdays that would cost \$600 thousand annually. Also, Commissioner Kane wanted to know the additional cost if you added the weekend. Staff stated the cost would be 1.2 million. Commissioner Kane asked about the ridership and current frequency for the AT2X. Staff stated that ridership is low. Commissioner Kane wanted to know along Eisenhower where service might be impacted by N1, if the new residential complexes were currently running shuttles. Staff cannot say if shuttles are running in the new residential complexes because there are no longer Transportation Management Plan (TMP) requirements in place.

Commissioner Gaskins requested that staff hold a future Alexandria Mobility Plan Advisory Committee meeting to discuss potential solutions to the issue raised by Commissioner Gonzalez of shifting more buses onto King Street and looking at ways to make buses move more efficiently.

Chairman Klejst asked for a motion to move the letter forward with the modifications to add language regarding a sensitivity analysis for Title IV and the ability to come up with AT2 service that is currently being offered to the residents in the Seminary corridor. Commissioner Gaskins made a motion to approve the letter with the modifications discussed and to provide the Commission with a copy of the final letter to the ATC Board. Vice-Chair McMahan seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Chairman Klejst requested staff to make the modifications and send it to him for signature by Friday, November 22. Staff confirmed.

## **5. Action Item: SMART SCALE Proposed Changes**

SMART SCALE is a statewide grant program proven essential in ensuring that transportation investments made both statewide and within the region are demonstrated to efficiently move people and goods and improve safety. It has been recognized nationally as a successful grant program for providing sorely needed funds for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects that lead to real congestion mitigation, safety improvements and promote the region's environmental sustainability. Alexandria has been the recipient of over \$100 million this last round from the SMART SCALE grant. These funds were for the West End Transitway, Potomac Yard Metro Southwest Access, and other improvements of Duke Street and West Taylor Run Parkway, along with other safety and capacity improvements.

Because road widening projects in rural areas have not generally scored well and were not funded, VDOT has been tasked with re-examining the scoring criteria. Many of the changes put transit and bicycle and pedestrian projects at a disadvantage, and projects in denser areas in general. Specifically, the changes to the scoring criteria include land use; congestion; safety; project readiness; and transit maintenance facilities. Under the proposed changes, most potentially eligible improvements are focused on rural safety, ignoring the needs of state and county highways that are more urban in nature, require different treatments, and could improve safety for more people.

Commissioner Kane asked if Fairfax and Arlington are supportive of the proposed changes. Staff explained that the proposed changes were made by VDOT to address the concerns of those jurisdictions that are not Arlington and Alexandria.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) has funded many important projects at high crash locations. However, under the proposed changes, most potentially eligible improvements are focused on rural safety, ignoring the needs of state and county highways that are more urban in nature, require different treatments, and could save just as many lives.

Staff is requesting that the Transportation Commission send a letter to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) rejecting the SMART SCALE changes. Many of the proposed changes undermine the goals of SMART SCALE and VTrans, the state's long-range plan, and could lead to more traffic congestion. Some of the changes will negatively impact jurisdictions that are already dense and want to invest in environmentally sustainable projects that move people, relieve congestion and improve safety. The SMART SCALE scenario test shows transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects as the most negatively impacted by the proposed changes. In fact, these are exactly the types of projects that have shown the most benefit and should continue to be funded. The proposed changes will also make it more difficult to achieve Vision Zero and hurt communities that are burdened by regional traffic.

Commissioner Marsh asked if City Council was meeting with the State Legislative Delegation the week of November 25, and if it is a legislative issue that could potentially be included on the agenda. Given how fortunate the City has been with the grant program to date, it seems relevant to address the State Legislative Delegation with the Commission's concerns. Staff explained that the City's legislative program was put together in August 2019 and this proposed change came in October for final approval in December.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked why the level of detail is not highlighted in staff's draft memo to the CTB, in terms of mentioning key issues under the SMART SCALE/HSIP evaluation and the proposal shortcomings.

In order to keep the memo high level, staff felt it was necessary to focus on the impact of the proposal to the City, instead of the specific changes. The Vice-Chair feels that staff's letter does not specifically address the proposal's shortcomings. Commission Kane suggested including the information from the presentation slide showing the impact of the proposal and what the recommendation should be. Commissioner Jakubek suggested putting a little more detail in the draft letter would be useful. Commissioner Gaskins would like staff to include language that tells the CTB that these proposed changes hurt the entire region.

The Commission did not act on this item because staff will revise the draft letter to include the level of detail on the proposal's shortcomings, then email it to Commission for review and approval by Friday, November 22.

#### **6. Discussion Item: WMATA Proposed Budget**

The City of Alexandria allocates upwards of \$40 million per year towards WMATA's operating budget and upwards of \$12 million towards its capital budget. In coordination with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, and through the two Virginia WMATA board members, Alexandria participates in the budget process to ensure that the City's investment reflects its priorities.

The proposed capital budget includes a continuation of WMATA's Strategic Plan: Keeping Metro Safe, Reliable, and Affordable. The proposed FY 2021 new budget initiatives include restoring late night Metrorail service; better weekend Metrorail and metrobus service; improving customer service; reducing less productive bus routes; and increasing non-fare revenue. In addition to service initiatives, there is also a proposal to make a range of changes to fares and passes. The fare proposals include increasing the base fare by 0.10; the peak max fare is increasing to 7 dollars, changes to bus passes to make them more beneficial and eliminating the bus to rail transfer discount from Metrobus.

Staff is requesting input from the Transportation Commission to inform how staff should respond to the proposed budget.

Commissioner Jakubek sympathizes with the City because of the major problems Metro has had. Commissioner Kane supports the proposal in simplifying the bus pass system and would like to see bus passes become transposable region wide.

Commissioner Gaskin mentioned several newspaper articles that discussed the negative impact the increased fares without SmartTrip would have on disadvantaged individuals. Vice-Chair McMahon mentioned that from a practical point it makes sense to shift individuals from on-board fare loading because it slows down bus service. However, the City needs to find ways to encourage individuals to have SmartTrip cards. Commissioner Kane suggested giving out SmartTrip cards at community outreach events. Chairman Klejst discussed when DASH eliminated the ability to add value on the bus that there was a very aggressive marketing plan and no ridership was lost as a result of it.

**7. Updates to Receive (Consent Items)**

The Commission discussed the following topics from the Consent Agenda:

**A. Pegram Street Bike Facilities**

Commissioner Kane asked staff when the flex post will be installed. Staff currently does not have a date of when the flex post will be installed but will follow-up with the Commission. Commissioner Jakubek feels that people parking in the bike lane is not as important as someone parking in the restricted area located in front the school.

**B. Pedestrian Safety Awareness Week**

Commissioner Kane feels the most effective part of the program was the signs put up by the staff at the various locations where improvements were made. Commissioner Kane would like to recommend that staff continue to put up signs when future improvements are made. Commissioner Jakubek agreed with Commissioner Kane.

**8. Other business**

The High School Project is a project that Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has been conducting to decide on how to grow high school capacity over the next 5 to 10 years. ACPS has been looking at two different models and have chosen the one High School Solution to expand capacity at the Minnie Howard Site Campus. The High School Project Advisory Group is going to guide ACPS on current site planning and access issues regarding the new high school site. Along with any needed improvements at the TC Williams Campus.

The Commission has been asked to provide a representative to the High School Project Advisory Group. Commissioner Gaskins volunteered to be the representative for the High School Project Advisory Group.

Chairman Klejst initiated discussion among the Commission to have staff remove the listing off the Transportation Commission website that listed each Transportation Commissioners personal information. Chairman Klejst asked if the Commission would be okay with just having each Commissioner's name and affiliation listed on the website. Also, Vice-Chair McMahon requested that staff list the Transportation Commission's general email address on the Transportation Commission website. The Commission agreed unanimously to have the personal listing removed from the Transportation Commission website. Instead, a listing of each Commissioner's name and affiliation along with the general email address for the Commission will be listed.

**Adjournment**

At 9:22 pm, The Transportation Commission adjourned.