



City of Alexandria
Transportation Commission

Regular Meeting

October 16, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Council Workroom

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Vice-Chair Melissa McMahon, Commissioner Bruce Marsh, Councilmember Canek Aguirre, Commissioner Casey Kane, Commissioner Oscar Gonzalez, Commissioner John Goebel, Commissioner Carolyn Schroeder.

Staff Present: Hillary Orr – Transportation & Environmental Services Deputy Director; Christopher Ziemann - Transportation Planning Division Chief; Jennifer Slesinger - Transportation Planning Division; Sharese Thomas - Transportation Planning Division, Jose Ayala – Department of Planning & Zoning.

Audio/Visual¹ presentation is available online:

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

Vice-Chair McMahon called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

1. Public Comment Period

Steve Milone, an Alexandrian resident of thirty years and President of the Old Town Civic Association, supports staff's recommendation on extending the Dockless Mobility Pilot Program. In addition to the base user fee, the Old Town Civic Association is requesting that a per vehicle fee be added to address users from dumping scooters down on the ground. The Old Town Civic Association supports the prohibition of electric scooters on sidewalks in Old Town because of narrow sidewalks and older pedestrians walking on sidewalks.

Yvonne Callahan, an Alexandrian resident and Vice-President of the Old Town Civic Association, is concerned about the safety of residents because of the large volume of electric scooters being dumped on the ground throughout the City. Since Tuesday, October 15, at 9:00 a.m. there have been four electric scooters down on the ground in front of her home. Ms. Callahan feels the City is in a dilemma because the Commonwealth of Virginia passed a bill that makes it almost impossible to enforce the ban of electric scooters on sidewalks. A conservative effort to make some legislative changes are vital because the new bill passed does not state a minimum age limit to operate an electric scooter. When the Transportation Commission is putting together recommendations for

what the task force should investigate, it should research what laws they can and cannot enforce.

2. September Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Kane made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and Commissioner Gonzalez seconded the motion. Motion carries with Commissioner Schroeder abstaining due to her excused absence.

3. Commissioner Updates

Commissioner Kane: The Traffic and Parking Board met on September 28 and discussed revising the current Residential Parking Program. The Board put forth a series of questions that they asked Staff to answer regarding the Residential Parking Program. Staff's response to the Board's questions will be discussed during the next Board meeting on October 28.

Commissioner Gonzalez complimented staff on their hard work in putting together the Transportation Innovation Forum that occurred on October 7.

Commissioner Schroeder: During the Environmental Policy Commission meeting on October 21, there was discussion about the budget and drafting a letter to send forward to City Council which focused on Environmental Action Plan's big ticket items that would help with reducing greenhouse gases and climate change. The Commission agreed that it was okay to move forward with the letter as drafted.

Vice-Chair McMahon attended the Transportation Innovation Forum on October 7 and thought there were some excellent speakers on the Forum.

Commissioner Kane commented that the Transportation Innovation Form on October 7 was informative, but the only issue was that every panel member was trying to answer every question. As a result, some questions were not answered. Commissioner Kane asked if there was any plan to form another panel to address those unanswered questions. Staff does not have a plan right now to follow-up on those unanswered questions; however, many of the remaining questions were answered through other questions. As the process progresses, staff plans to reach out to the panel and subject matter experts to understand different perspectives on the issues the City is working through.

4. Public Hearing and Action Item: Dockless Mobility Pilot

Vicky Caudullo, Program Manager for the City's Shared Mobility program, presented an update of the City's Dockless Mobility Pilot, which began in January of 2019. Staff presented an overview of the program and corresponding outreach activities, findings from the data, and recommendations for a Phase II of the pilot. Staff made mid-way adjustments in response to Council and resident feedback that improved perceptions of the pilot for many, including signage on King Street, corrals to centralize parking, and creating "no park" zones in the applications. Data from the providers indicated that there were about 200,000 total trips, averaging a little over 1 mile at a cost of about \$4.20 each. Recommendations for Phase II include modifications to code, improving equity and regional distribution of scooters, further addressing parking issues, and minimizing the cost to the City and creating enhanced opportunities for community involvement.

Commissioner Gonzalez expressed concerns about the resident feedback question asking users if they are forgoing an automobile trip for a scooter. Based upon the way the questions are being asked in the resident feedback, it intuitively does not make sense that users are forgoing an automobile trip for a scooter based on travel demand and average length of trip. Staff clarified that the in calculating the average trip length of trip, there are also longer trips that could have been alternatively been made by automobile.

Vice-Chair McMahon opened the discussion to the Commission for action on the request to endorse staff's

extension of the Dockless Mobility Pilot to Phase II.

Commissioner Kane is in favor of extending the Pilot because of different issues that still need to be researched for consideration. Also, through outreach and public hearings more information can be gathered to inform the Dockless Mobility Pilot program that can also assist the Ad-Hoc Scooter Task Force.

Commissioner Marsh stated that reaching out and coordinating with the State Delegation in the upcoming session in terms of the State law can allow for some laws to be streamlined.

Commissioner Schroeder would like the Pilot to include more community outreach with the emphasis being on safety, in addition to having more pop-up events that include interactive outreach.

Commissioner Kane asked if there is a limit to the amount of money that the City can charge the scooter companies, or do they reach a point and just walk away. The City is trying to be reasonable in terms of what the actual cost is and just recover the costs of the program. Commissioner Kane asked whether we have to accept their business model without being able to regulate them. Staff stated that there is discussion at the State level on how to regulate but the City cannot regulate on its own. Vice-Chair McMahon agreed that this aligns with the point Ms. Callahan was making about what the State will enable the City to do. While the City is limited with regulating scooters it is even more limited with the ride hail companies.

Commissioner Gonzalez recognizes that the City is trying to be proactive by managing and corralling scooters and it's a great option for residents to use, but the City needs to enforce safety on sidewalks. Commissioner Gonzalez recommends that all scooters be banned from sidewalks in all of Alexandria and not just in Old Town. He feels that it has become a pedestrian safety issue, someone must look out for the pedestrians. He also asked how scooters fit with Vision Zero.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked staff about the implications of the law that changed in July 2019 that will take effect in January 2020. Deputy Director Orr stated that the City can pass an ordinance at any time, but the law states that if jurisdictions don't have an ordinance in place as of January 1, 2020, then scooters are legally allowed on sidewalks. Commissioner Gonzalez asked if there is any plan to discuss passing an ordinance by January 1, 2020 banning scooters on the sidewalk.

Deputy Director Orr stated that staff is not recommending banning scooters from sidewalks because it is not the recommendation of best practices from other cities. Also, staff does not feel that it is safe to ban scooters from all sidewalks in the City because of the various speed limits throughout the City. Commissioner Gonzalez is concerned about the enforcement issue and does not understand the logic behind allowing scooters to ride on sidewalks in some neighborhoods and not others. This becomes an equity issue because if you live in a less desirable neighborhood then it could be okay to ride scooters on the sidewalk.

Vice-Chair McMahon perceives that the City would have better luck with enforcement if they were not trying to ban scooters from all sidewalks in the City. Realistically the City would end up with the same issue it has now, which effectively is that they are not allowed on any sidewalk. She asked if staff can analyze where the high pedestrian conflict areas are which include King Street, but may extend to more parts of Old Town and other parts of the Community. Then staff can focus their effort on enforcing sidewalk riding exclusions where it would be most helpful for pedestrians.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked where the bike ban stops on King Street. Commissioner Kane replied that the ban extends west to West Street [on King Street].

Vice-Chair McMahon stated that there are some scooter riders who have never even ridden a bike before and so they have no understanding of how to use small devices with cars and pedestrians, so we are on a learning curve. Commissioner Gonzalez does not want anyone to be collateral damage while the City determines

whether scooters on sidewalks may be safe. Commissioner Gonzalez is trying not to make the conversation so black and white, but would like the City to be direct with residents and tell them that riding scooters on sidewalks is a pedestrian safety issue. Vice-Chair McMahon stated that it is also a scooter ride safety issue if you force them in the street where it's not safe for them to be in the road with cars.

Vice Chair McMahon asked if staff is recommending requiring scooters to not use sidewalks if there is a bike lane or a protected bike lane. Deputy Director Orr stated that staff has considered it, but there are not a lot of protected bike lanes in the City. When reviewing the feedback form, staff asked users "where you ride or where do you want to ride." Only 14 percent said on a sidewalk. Most users do not want to ride on a sidewalk, they want to ride in a bike lane or a trail, so it comes down to creating facilities on the street that make users feel safe. The code states that the bicycle lane is defined as a place for a bicycle to ride, so staff is proposing to add other micro mobility devices. People are riding on sidewalks as a last resort when they do not feel safe.

Commissioner Goebel would like to know if there is a way to measure how many trips are productive versus bored teenagers riding around on a Friday night. The majority of the trips are occurring during commuting hours. However, staff asked those surveyed about trip purpose and a good number of people said they ride for fun.

Commissioner Schroeder fears that users will find it more fun to ride scooters and are going to choose to ride them over bikes, which will lead to vehicle drivers seeing more scooter riders on the road. Commissioner Schroeder is in support of scooters being used in place of car trips.

Commissioner Kane moved to approve staff's draft recommendations with some specific amendments, Commissioner Gonzalez seconded the motion.

Commissioner Gonzalez moved to amend the motion that scooters be banned on all sidewalks in the City. Vice Chairman McMahon seconded the motion for discussion. Vice Chairman McMahon called for a vote supporting the amendment to ban scooters on all sidewalks in the City. Commissioner Gonzalez voted to support the amendment. Commissioners Kane, Schroeder, Marsh, Goebel and Vice-Chair McMahon opposed support for the amendment. The vote 1-5 on the amendment to ban scooters on all sidewalks in the City did not pass.

Staff requested to remove two items from the original docket of staff recommendations. The first item is evaluating a speed limit for scooters on a sidewalk because it would not be possible for the Police Department to enforce. The second item was the requirement that riders under 14 years old wear helmets; the City Attorney does not think the City can enforce this due to State codes. Vice-Chairman McMahon proposed an amendment to the main motion to acknowledge staff's modifications to the original proposal to remove the "evaluate the feasibility for setting a speed limit for sidewalks" bullet and to remove "require riders under 14 years old to wear a helmet" bullet from the original motion. Commissioner Kane seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Vice-Chair McMahon made a motion to have staff put an emphasis on exploring opportunities to gain more legislative authority for regulating scooters from the State. She also requested including in the staff recommendations that the City commit to scooter outreach with a safety focus highlighting some of the concepts we may not be able to codify but that we know what we want the Community to take to heart as they share the road and sidewalk safely with other users.. Commissioner Schroeder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Commissioner Marsh asked that once the task force is established that they provide the Commission with an update around mid-year.

5. Action Item: CMAQ/RSTP Grant

Staff is seeking the Commission's endorsement for CMAQ and RSTP grant applications, based on their consideration at the September meeting. In November, Staff will bring the grants to City Council for approval in order to submit the request to Northern Virginia Transportation Authority in December.

Staff is requesting \$3.75 million for Smart Mobility implementation, \$500,000 for Transportation Demand Management and \$350,000 for Capital Bikeshare replacement equipment. Because the funds will be available in six years, staff is not specifying the exact use of the smart mobility request.

Commissioner Kane asked if there was an update on the contract negotiation for the Bikeshare. Staff stated that Arlington County successfully rode the Falls Church contract, so the City is working through the same process.

Commissioner Kane made a motion to endorse the CMAQ/RSTP funding request and recommend City Council consideration and approval of the November Council Legislative session. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded the motion.

Vice-Chair McMahon stated that these are three priorities that Transportation Commission is very supportive of and is glad staff is anticipating ahead of time what the City might need funds for in terms of the smart mobility initiatives.

Commissioner Kane commented that it is amazing to see the dashboard on Seminary Road that displays the real travel times. In addition, it is very informative and hints at the potential of what smart mobility may ultimately provide residents, and data staff can use to inform others.

Vice-Chair McMahon called for a vote on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Updates to Receive (Consent Items)

The Commission discussed the following topics from the Consent Agenda:

A. Potomac Yard Metrorail Station

Commissioner Marsh discussed the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group meeting that took place on September 25th. The City is still waiting for the Army Corps of Engineer permit. The contractors have been able to start some of the prep work for construction. A lot of discussion came up about parking for employees and the potential for additional traffic in the Potomac Yard on the Westside of the station. The Implementation Group will revisit the issue about employee parking and the potential impact at a later date. Estimates for the second entrance will be coming back in November.

Commissioner Kane asked if there had been any further discussion on the concern about the funding the City was providing to the National Park Service and where that funding was going to be targeted. Commissioner Marsh replied that a request was going to be made to see if the funds could be transferred to a project that was closer in the area. However, once the Park Service receives the funds, they have discretion over how the funds are appropriated. Commissioner Marsh will receive an update at the next Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group meeting on October 29.

B. Alexandria Transit Vision

Vice-Chairman McMahon discussed the last stakeholder workshop on the Transit Vision Study to review the draft recommended bus network for 2022 and 2030.

There was a discussion about what the draft networks look like and if there is a certain level of investment that will be provided by City Council. In 2022 an eight percent budget increase will allow for more service on

certain lines and some changes to lines that will increase overall performance for a lot of the community. Positive findings in terms of the community receiving more frequent bus services in the 2030 future network, also presumes continued investment in the bus system beyond what the City currently has today.

The stakeholder group that will receive the least amount of benefits are the seniors as a group because primarily there are a lot of older residents who live in the less dense center of the City. The revised networks are emphasizing better services where there are more people. More seniors still receive better access to higher frequency service, but there is a small percentage that would lose service entirely because there are some center city bus routes that will be eliminated.

Commissioner Kane asked if there was discussion about reviewing other means of providing service because he did not see on-demand services in the network map.

Vice-Chair McMahon confirmed the discussion that the proposed alternatives were costed out. The proposal for an on-demand service did not move forward. It does not mean that DASH could not potentially experiment with the idea if funding was available for it.

Commissioner Kane commented that in the meantime those areas that are going to be without services have no options for public transportation. Vice-Chair McMahon confirmed they will not have any options for public transportation.

Commissioner Gonzalez stated that when you think of micro mobility there are kinds of technology issues that individuals are starting to implement now. Staff confirmed that this is a topic that the Alexandria Mobility Plan will be looking into as well.

Councilmember Canek Aguirre asked if staff had the location, dates and times for the proposed fifteen or twenty pop-up events for the Alexandria Transit Vision. Currently staff does not have this information. Aguirre asked that staff share this with the Commission when available.

7. Other business

Commissioner Gonzalez asked if DASH does Vision Zero driver training for drivers. Staff stated that DASH does offer driver safety training, but not a special Vision Zero driver training.

Adjournment

At 8:55 pm, The Transportation Commission adjourned.