



City of Alexandria
Transportation Commission

Regular Meeting

February 21, 2018
7:00 p.m.
Council Workroom

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Chair Stephen Klejst, Vice-Chair Melissa McMahon, Commissioner David Brown, Commissioner Alyia Gaskins, Commissioner Oscar Gonzalez, Commissioner Jake Jakubek, Commissioner Carolyn Schroeder, Councilman John Chapman.

Staff Present: Hillary Orr - T&ES, Allan Fye - Transit Services, Christopher Ziemann – Transportation Planning, Ramiro Rios - Transportation Planning, Quance Lawson - Transportation Planning.

Vice-Chair Melissa McMahon called the Transportation Commission meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Public Comment Period

Vice Chair McMahon opened and closed the Public Comment Period with no comments from the public.

Vice Chair McMahon welcomed new commissioner Alyia Gaskins to the Transportation Commission. Gaskins resides west of Quaker Lane and possesses qualifications in Medicine and Public Health while also completing a Master's degree in Urban Planning.

Vice Chair McMahon mentioned that T&ES staff provided an update to the CY 2018 Transportation Commission Work Plan.

2. January 17, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair McMahon made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Jake Jakubek seconded the motion and the Commission unanimously approved.

3. Updates to Receive (Consent Items)

The Commission received updates on Funding, the SMART SCALE application process, the I-395 Express Lanes Transportation Management Plan, Motorcoach Updates and Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) Improvements.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked for clarification of the SMART SCALE application funding process and how successful the City had been in securing funding compared to other jurisdictions. Allan Fye, Transit Services Division Chief, stated that the City has been successful with this application process. During the last application period, City staff submitted five projects for funding consideration to the State. Fye reported that four of the five projects were approved and granted 100 percent of requested funding. Fye also reported that the City can apply for only four projects at a time this year. DASH is considered a separate entity, and is eligible to submit requests for up to four projects. Ramiro Rios asked if the state provided any feedback on why they rejected the grant application for the Multi-Modal Bridge. Fye responded that the Multi-Modal Bridge application was rejected because the state found that the Multi-Modal Bridge was in the early stages of implementation and thereby not ready for State funding.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked T&ES staff to provide more details on the I-395 Express Lanes and the Transportation Management Plan in terms of who is doing the employer outreach and how the City plans to keep track of the projects' progress and personnel obligations. Allan Fye stated that this Transportation Management Plan (TMP) is strictly during the construction period. Funding is provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Department of Rail and Transportation (DRPT) is coordinating this effort. T&ES staff and DRPT are in the process of creating a memorandum of agreement to determine what resources are available to dedicate to the City of Alexandria. A VDOT contractor will work directly with our City's TDM Program team. The agreement will require contractors to provide quarterly reports and detailed status updates. Commissioner Gaskins asked what the current plan is regarding outreach and what kind of impact is expected with this funding. Fye stated that the city would enlist an employer outreach contractor to engage with employers across the entire city to help educate them on alternative transportation options that will be available during the construction. The state will encourage the use of teleworking, carpooling, vanpooling as well as subsidizing additional trips on the 21A and 21D Metro buses.

Vice-Chair McMahon asked staff to provide a detailed overview about the Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) Improvements. Commissioner Schroeder asked if staff could also inform the commission about what alternatives are currently available for ensuring sidewalks remain open during construction. T&ES Division Chief, Christopher Ziemann stated that Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) improvement's goal is to navigate people safely around construction sites. Currently, the City is using the 2011 VDOT guidance to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety and gives guidance on re-routing pedestrian paths and how to close sidewalks effectively (the Virginia Work Area Protection Manual). Staff is promoting and requiring the 2016 VDOT manual (Virginia Department of Transportation's Work Zone Pedestrian and Bicycle Guidance) to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access around construction sites. Ziemann added that the finalization of this process is an action item in the Vision Zero Action Plan and will be included in the Complete Streets Program. Principal Planner Katye North presented the City's memo on MOT to NAIOP on February 21, 2018. They will have two weeks to give comments once the draft Memo to Industry is sent, and after that staff will publicly release the MOT Final Memo to Industry. Schroeder asked if there was a trigger related to how big the project is or how long sidewalks will be closed. Ziemann stated that the standard will be triggered by projects with sidewalk impacts of more than seven days. McMahon mentioned that

there has been a large sidewalk closure at the Edens construction site along Montgomery Street with little to no access. Ziemann responded that the Edens construction site is a special case due to the necessary water main repairs. Schroeder asked if there is a plan for enforcement to make sure they are following the construction plans. Ziemann stated that an MOT plan is usually included in the permitting process. Generally, if the contractors begin with an MOT plan that provides safe access around construction sites, it will be followed as inspectors are on-site to help ensure the MOT plan is implemented correctly. Commissioner Jakubek asked if the Commission can review and comment on the new draft of the MOT guidance plan. Commissioner Schroeder asked if there are any rules in place for sidewalks that are closed for less than seven days. Ziemann stated that the 2011 MOT plan currently has nothing in place for projects under seven days. Commissioner Gaskins referenced the DC MOT improvement models and asked about their biggest challenges in implementing this plan. Ziemann stated that the most notable challenges have been in their permitting staff and their willingness to enforce.

4. Commission Updates

Commissioner Jakubek reported that the Eisenhower West-Landmark Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group met on February 12, 2018. The Advisory Group continued talks regarding the Multi-Modal Bridge that spans across Norfolk Southern's (NS) property. Norfolk Southern provided their preferred alignment for the bridge and proposed that the bridge is placed farther west. Jakubek reported that the City has not made a final determination on the option of the bridge that features the Eisenhower Ave straightening (Option 2); however, City staff may be leaning towards this option. Commissioner Jakubek will continue to provide more updates as the project progresses. Commissioner David Brown asked why the railroad company would be concerned about the placement of the bridge. Jakubek replied that they have a thoroughbred transfer facility and the company would like to keep it free from anything that may impede their current and future operations. Brown asked if there is a clearance issue with the tracks. Jakubek stated that the clearance requirement for the NS proposed alignment is 23 feet, and that there was no issue with height clearance.

Commissioner Schroeder reported that the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) held a Winter Retreat at City Hall on February 3, 2018. The Commission discussed electric vehicles/buses and how the climate and energy chapters in the Environmental Action Plan could provide a base to overlap into the other sectors including transportation. Schroeder also reported that there will be an Eco-City Café public meeting held on March 10, 2018 at 9:00 am at Durant Memorial Center and the Alexandria Planning Commission and Environmental Policy Commission will hold a joint work session on March 22, 2018 at 7:00 pm at City Hall, Room 1101.

Councilman John Chapman provided some highlights from the FY2019-2028 Budget Proposal meeting last night. The City Manager has proposed fully implementing Vision Zero by adding six police officers to enforce traffic safety, requesting funds to expand educational opportunities as well as make the appropriate capital investments in streetscape and street paving plans. The City Manager has proposed a small increase in DASH fares to help maintain services to include a lower off-peak fare program for senior citizens. The City plans to expand the free ride program for other high school students outside of T.C. Williams High School. A meeting will be held on March 21, 2018 to discuss budget details.

Chairman Stephen Klejst reported that the electric buses demonstration commenced on February 3, 2018. The buses were very quiet, spacious and were able to maintain schedule while piloted. Klejst stated that there is a concern to obtain capital resources to help alter the infrastructure at the bus facilities to replace the hybrid diesel fleet. Commissioner Jakubek asked if the buses ran during the week. Klejst responded that the buses have run all but two routes. Commissioner Schroeder asked if there was any feedback from the public. Klejst stated that everyone seemed pleased and did not receive any negative comments. Klejst reported that the DASH fare increase was weighed very carefully. DASH representatives determined that a large fare increase would negatively impact their core ridership.

Chairman Klejst announced that he is no longer with the National Transportation Safety Board and is now the Executive Director of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. He also mentioned that he does not foresee his new position having an impact in his role as the Transportation Commission Chair.

5. FY 2019-2028 Budget Proposal

Hillary Orr, T&ES Deputy Director, provided a brief overview of the annual budget process. Orr explained that the City department heads submit their capital project request(s) in September, the Transportation Commission provides budget guidance in the Fall, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Steering Committee provides their recommendations for the CIP budget to the City Manager in the Winter, and the City Manager consolidates all recommendations and proposes a final CIP and Operating budget to the City Council in March. Orr stated that this year staff started priority-based budgeting to allow staff to add to the budget process in the future and focus on right sizing for each department's budget. The budget also proposes a higher level of capital investments, implementing Vision Zero and improving the King Street retail corridor. Vice Chair McMahon asked what improvements are going to be made to the King Street retail corridor. Orr stated that this project will focus on upkeep and maintenance. Commissioner Schroeder asked if this is what staff expected to see in the budget proposal. Orr confirmed and stated these funds will be instrumental in helping to implement Vision Zero recommendations. Staff plans to wrap Vision Zero action items into a lot of the existing Complete Street program projects and initiating improvements to some of the high crash location sites.

Commissioner Gaskins asked staff to elaborate on data collection and evaluation plans and other key milestones. Orr stated that the Action Plan includes key milestone aspects. Staff will provide quarterly updates to the Transportation Commission as well as an annual report for first year action items in 2019. Commissioner Gonzalez asked if there is a document reference available to review all proposed Complete Streets Program Projects aligned with Vision Zero action items. Orr stated that they are included in the full Budget proposal. Vice-Chair McMahon asked staff to describe the roles and responsibilities of the Vision Zero and Complete Streets Program managers. Orr stated that the Transportation Planning Division is almost fully staffed and consists of a new Vision Zero & Complete Streets Coordinator, Christine Mayeur and Complete Streets Program Manager, Darren Buck, who will be the primary point of contact for Vision Zero and Complete Streets. McMahon also asked if there are any points of contacts outside of the city. Orr stated that the internal action plan has a specific point of contact for each action item and spreads across the entire city.

Allan Fye, Transit Services Division Chief, provided a high-level overview of the Transit and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget for FY 2019-2028. Fye reported a few notable changes to the CIP such as additional funding in Dash Facility Expansion, DASH Technology, King Street Metro Improvements and West End Transitway. Commissioner Gonzalez asked Fye to clarify what the King Street Metro Improvements include. Fye stated that the parking area and bus bays will be completely reconstructed to include pedestrian and other safety improvements, landscaping and streetscaping, added bus stops and reallocated space for taxi's, carshare, bikeshare and parking. Commissioner Gonzalez asked how far the pedestrian improvements will extend. Fye stated it will be limited to the King Street Metro area. Councilman Chapman asked if any of these improvements include better access to Alexandria's Union Station. Fye stated that no improvements were planned for Union station and that the project is being managed VRE. Allan Fye reported the FY2019 Transit Investments to Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Virginia Railroad Express (VRE), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and DASH Subsidies. Fye stated that two transit bills; the Senate Bill SB856 (Saslaw) and House Bill HB1539 (Hugo) are advancing in the General Assembly. Fye demonstrated that the Senate Bill provides more funding flexibility whereas the House Bill does not. Vice Chair McMahon asked why the House Bill HB1539 (Hugo) is so ineffective. Fye stated that the house bill is more resistant to new revenues and sensitive to new taxes.

6. FY 2019 Interdepartmental Long Range Plan Work Program

Ramiro Ríos, Principal Planner and Transportation Commission Liaison, provided an overview of the City's activities and projects of the Interdepartmental Long Range Plan for FY2019. The objective of the City's IDLRPWP is to improve quality of life for all citizens. Rios stated that some of the priorities within the long-range plan including land use, transportation, mobility, accessibility and sustainability, housing and open space. Some projects highlighted in the FY19 Work Program are Alexandria Transit Vision Study, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Vision Zero Action Plan & Complete Streets Program, Landmark Mall Re-planning, Transportation Master Plan, Environmental Action Plan and Green Building Policy Updates, Central Alexandria Traffic Study, and Residential Parking Permit Districts and Meter location. Commissioner Jakubek asked when staff anticipates the Central Alexandria Traffic Study to be completed. Deputy Director Orr stated that a meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2018 to present recommendations and short-term improvements. Vice Chair McMahon asked if the Transportation Commission will be able to see the final results of the Central Traffic Study. Orr stated that deliverables will be added to the work plan.

7. Other Business

Christopher Ziemann announced that the next Transportation Commission meeting, scheduled for March 21, 2018, will conflict with the Budget Work Session for Livable, Green, and Prospering Focus Area and suggested moving the meeting to March 28, 2018 to incorporate budgetary feedback. Commission unanimously approved.

At 8:36 pm, Chair Klejst made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jakubek and unanimously approved.