



2016 MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE MEETING #1

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Thursday, March 10, 2016 | 7:00-9:00 pm
Charles Houston Recreation Center - Multipurpose Room | 901 Wythe Street

NOTES

Welcome, Introductions

Committee members in attendance:

- Steve Klejst, Chair
- Melissa McMahon, Vice Chair
- David Glazier
- Susan Howells
- David Kasprzyk
- Charlotte Hall
- Victor Parra
- Anne White-Olson
- Bert Ely
- Lauren Kramer
- Steve Muttly
- Lisa Capobianco (proxy, King Street Blues)

Project staff:

- Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria
- Patrick Reed, City of Alexandria
- Yon Lambert, City of Alexandria

Public:

- Three (3) persons signed the sign-in sheet

Introductions (Yon Lambert, Stephen Klejst)

- Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) Director Yon Lambert opened the meeting. Mr. Lambert expressed his appreciation to the Task Force for their willingness to serve and turned the meeting over to Task Force Chair Steve Klejst.
- Chair Klejst made opening remarks about the charge of balancing quality of life for Alexandria's residents with the economic benefits the motorcoach industry brings to the City.
- Chair Klejst provided an overview of the agenda and led introductions.
- After introductions, Chair Klejst detailed the ground rules for the Task Force, as well as noted the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) rules applicable to the Task Force. Chair Klejst noted that all correspondence should be relayed through Patrick Reed, T&ES Staff Liaison for the purposes of maintaining records.

Context, Rationale, Objective, and Schedule (Patrick Reed)

- T&ES Urban Planner Patrick Reed detailed the efforts and outcomes of previous Task Force efforts.
- Mr. Reed discussed the rationale for the reconstitution of the Task Force, noting that development along the Waterfront will likely impact existing motorcoach facilities. Mr. Reed discussed the projected construction dates that will affect short term parking.
- The Task Force discussed the implications of construction on motorcoach parking, including the loss of spaces in the near-term. Mr. Reed pointed to the reservation data, and explained the City is currently doing outreach and working to find solutions for operators with existing reservations who may be impacted by the loss of motorcoach parking at Robinson Terminal North.

- The Task Force inquired about the routing of motorcoaches. T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted that this issue was explored by the previous Task Force, and that there were some regulatory constraints, and that the previous Task Force decided to pursue a simple, more communicable management framework given diffuse nature of the motorcoach industry.
- The Task Force inquired about whether or not existing designated spaces are for motorcoaches only, or if other vehicles park there as well. Mr. Lambert noted that the spaces on Swann Avenue, which are peak-season only, host non-motorcoach vehicles during the off-season.
- The Task Force discussed the importance of outreach to ensure operators are aware of existing facilities.
- The Task Force discussed the difficulty of obtaining data regarding infractions not intercepted by Alexandria Police Department (APD). One potential action would be to take down an operators Department of Transportation number to contact the company.
- The Task Force discussed school buses, and the need to acknowledge school buses as a potential issue, as well as minibuses. Mr. Lambert noted that traffic laws apply to these vehicles, and that these vehicles are subject to the same regulatory framework as motorcoaches. The Task Force noted that most school buses are controlled by the school districts and are not operated as charters. APD representative Lieutenant Jerry Newcomb noted that enforcement takes a common-sense approach toward enforcing school bus unloading/loading operations. The Task Force discussed outreach efforts to school districts regarding bus operations in Alexandria.
- Mr. Reed noted that the City is investigating the potential for an ambassador program to assist with this year's (2016) peak season operations during spring. Mr. Lambert noted that the City currently believes that it will likely not be a volunteer-driven process and that the City will likely make an investment in the pilot program.
- The Task Force inquired about signage and wayfinding. Mr. Lambert noted the need to balance wayfinding with the appearance of over-regulation. Mr. Lambert noted that "no bus" signage may be superfluous in that there are designated places in the City where buses can load and unload, but that everywhere else is not allowed. Mr. Lambert noted that the previous Task Force had recommended being judicious regarding signage, but that signage is certainly something this Task Force can discuss. The Task Force discussed potential location options and the operations of ambassadors in Old Town, as well as beyond (e.g. Franklin Street, Duke Street).
- The Task Force discussed the potential for a smart phone application that could be used to assist with motorcoach operations. The Task Force discussed outreach to not only tour bus operators, but also tour operators, to encourage operators and tour planners to download an application.
- The Task Force asked about longer term issues, and where discussion of longer-term needs will fit into the process. Mr. Reed replied that the intent is to focus on immediate concerns, but that longer term issues would be addressed and considered as they arise through the Task Force's work on addressing immediate needs.
- Mr. Reed detailed the staff's study processes and explained that input was needed from the Task Force to collect data. Mr. Reed noted that in order to make its recommendations, the Task Force will need to direct staff on what data it wants staff to collect.
- The Task Force noted that that the peak season term may need to be clarified. The peak season for commercial boating extends beyond the peak season for school trips.

Discussion of Evaluation Criteria (Steve Klejst)

- Mr. Klejst invited the Task Force to examine and comment on the list of evaluation criteria.
- The Task Force inquired if the staff had sites in mind currently. Mr. Klejst noted that it is important to start off with an agreed upon framework. The evaluation criteria would serve

this function. Mr. Lambert noted that staff does have potential locations, and would also welcome ideas for other locations. Mr. Lambert noted that objective criteria will help staff objectively evaluate locations.

- T&ES Transportation Planning Acting Division Chief Steve Sindiong clarified that the evaluation criteria are intended for analyses of both loading/unloading locations and short-term parking locations.
- The Task Force directed staff to add an evaluation criteria related to proximity to publically useable restroom facilities, and, if possible, food/retail establishments.
- The Task Force discussed “load generating points” (access points that motorcoach passengers are attempting to reach, e.g. commercial boat docks)
- The Task Force discussed the need to consider whether a solution is temporary or permanent (a solution’s shelf life), and clarified that this is distinct from evaluation criteria related to availability as it relates to existing loading zone, for peak-season only, etc.
- The Task Force discussed the need to assess whether there are costs to making a location work, and whether costs for long-term should be factored in.
- The Task Force discussed incentives to encourage operators to park in the correct locations, as well as the potential for public-private partnerships. The movie theater site at Potomac Yard was emphasized as a location where buses could park. T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted that the City has had discussion with this property owner in the past, and also noted that at this particular property, there are currently clear signs that say “no bus parking.” Mr. Lambert noted that the City would be very interested in pursuing a public-private partnership.
- The Task Force also discussed the benefit of pursuing locations of which the City has full control in consideration of long-term viability.
- The Task Force discussed how distance between locations may impact the viability of enforcement and capacity for enforcement (i.e. clustered spaces are easier to enforce). Mr. Lambert noted that the City Manager’s draft budget includes an increase in the number of parking enforcement officials.
- The Task Force discussed the potential to target the NRG site as a loading/unloading zone or short-term parking location, and the use of jitneys to shuttle people from the site to Old Town. Mr. Lambert noted that the City would have to work with the owner, that Pepco owns a portion of the site, and that Dominion has a proposal to run a line from that site. Mr. Lambert also noted that the City is in the process of doing a small area plan for North Old Town. He noted that this will be a framework plan, and won’t be specific, but would be an avenue to examine the potential of the NRG site. The Task Force further discussed coordination with NRG as a viable short-term alternative. Mr. Lambert noted that the City will follow-up on this, but that City would continue to look at transportation through the Old Town North Small Area Plan.
- The Task Force discussed jitneys to transport people between an unloading location outside of Old Town and passengers’ ultimate destination points. The Task Force specifically discussed the use of the trolley to transport passengers from the Masonic Memorial to points east in Old Town.
- In consideration of evaluation criteria for loading/unloading points, the Task Force discussed transit connections (e.g. jitneys, buses).
- The Task Force discussed the process and purpose of Data collection Tasks 1 and 2. Task Force Chair Steve Klejst noted that part of the purpose of evaluation criteria would be to present the Task Force with a clearer picture of a potential location’s impact on residents. The Task Force noted that this impact should include considerations about damage to residential streets as well environmental quality.
- The Task Force discussed the economic impact of desirable/undesirable locations, and whether or not this and environmental nuisance factors like noise and pollution could be objectively captured by evaluation criteria.

- Staff clarified that the “revenue impact” item related to loss of parking revenue, but that it could attempt to figure out a way to capture environmental and economic impact of potential future motorcoach facility locations using the evaluation criteria. The Task Force discussed previous economic analyses run by previous Task Forces, and noted that the revenue impact to the City extends beyond parking revenue (e.g. hotel tax, meal tax, etc.)
- The Task Force reiterated the need to quantify the economic impact of motorcoach locations and the environmental impact to residents (vs. just capturing proximity to residential structures).
- The Task Force discussed whether or not information about the impacts of buses would be helpful in siting a motorcoach facility. T&ES Director Yon Lambert detailed the process for road and pavement assessment (the pavement condition index). Mr. Lambert noted there is a correlation between heavy truck traffic and impact to roads. Mr. Lambert reminded the task force that there are a number of different kinds of heavy trucks (e.g. delivery trucks, transit buses, etc.) Mr. Lambert noted that it’s difficult to directly correlate impacts with a specific kind of heavy vehicle.
- Task Force Chair Steve Klejst suspended discussion of evaluation criteria in order to ensure the public had sufficient time to comment.

Public Comment (Steve Klejst)

- Wellington Watts described his ghost tour business, and invited the Task Force to come and observe his operations. Mr. Watts noted that while he is one of the more frequent motorcoach permit users in the City, he believes it is very important to ensure stability of structures in Old Town as it wouldn’t benefit his business to show the City’s historic structures in visible disrepair. Mr. Watts noted that he would be in favor of a loading/unloading zone in walking distance of Old Town or Old Town’s historic sites or close to the waterfront. Mr. Watts stated that this should be able to load/unload 5-10 buses at a time. Mr. Watts also suggested outreach to his operators and customers concerning economic impact analysis. Mr. Watts emphasized the need to balance historic preservation and local business needs. He reiterated his willingness to share whatever information that he has with Task Force members.
- The Task Force inquired about Mr. Watts’ suggestion that the new casino at National Harbor may generate additional tour bus traffic. T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted that the City does not have good data on this yet, but will be following-up about MGM over the Spring.

Final Comments (Steve Klejst)

- The Task Force discussed the differences between the impact to roads from motorcoaches and the impact to roads from trucks.
- The Task Force reiterated the need to examine school buses.
- The Task Force reviewed notes taken during the meeting on the evaluation criteria, which included the following:
 - o Modify criteria F to be more inclusive of the whole suite of impacts of coaches on quality of life and the environment.
 - o The impact of a site’s potential routing, which will be included in criteria G.
- Chair Klejst asked the Task Force to be ready to group criteria into three categories (most important, important, and least and important)
- Chair Klejst instructed the Task Force to send Mr. Reed dates that will not work for meeting number #3 based on the provided calendar.
- Chair Klejst thanked the Task Force and closed the meeting at 9:03pm.