



2016 MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE MEETING #2

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Thursday, May 31, 2016 | 7:00-9:00 pm
Charles Houston Recreation Center - Multipurpose Room | 901 Wythe Street

NOTES

Committee members in attendance:

- Steve Klejst, Chair
- David Glazier
- Steve Mutty
- Susan Howells
- Randy Cole
- Lisa Capobianco
- Charlotte Hall
- Lauren Kramer
- Anne White Olson
- David Kasprzyck
- Bert Ely

Project staff:

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

Public:

- 5 people signed the sign-in sheet

Introductions (Stephen Klejst)

- Chair Klejst opened the meeting and walked staff through the agenda and the order of the evening's tasks.
- After detailing the evening's agenda, Chair Klejst noted that the Task Force would need to select a Vice Chair for the group as the previous Vice Chair had resigned. There being no immediate interest, the chair moved to the next topic.
- Chair Klejst briefly reviewed the group's ground rules.
- T&ES Task Force liaison Patrick Reed reviewed the objectives of the Task Force and noted that any drafted recommendations need not be consensus recommendations.
- T&ES Transportation Planning Acting Division Chief Steve Sindiong reviewed the project's schedule, noting proposed changes to the agenda, explaining the process of using evaluation criteria to create scores that will inform the Task Force's recommendations.
- Sindiong noted that any location recommendations of the Task Force would need to be reviewed by the Traffic and Parking Board.

Review of Existing Parking Data (Patrick Reed)

- Reed noted that there were two different data collection tasks in relation to data collection for parking including a review of demand for motorcoach parking at existing locations as well as parking utilization at existing locations.
- Reed reviewed the four existing designated motorcoach parking locations (Robinson Terminal North, North Old Town, Swann Avenue, and Masonic Memorial).
- Reed noted that to study demand at existing locations, staff used mixed methods. The Swann Avenue location had people placed in the field, while staff used reservation system data at the other three locations.
- Reed noted the study weekend, and the rationale for selecting this period.

- Reed noted the difference between Masonic Memorial and other reservation sites, noting that motorcoaches pay to park at Masonic Memorial (\$15 dollars for eights hours and \$40 for overnight parking).
- A Task Force member asked the definition of short term parking.
- Reed responded that this is parking at any amount of time for up to four hours.
- A Task Force member noted that he had spoken with the drivers of two coaches who had taken out permits, but were parked in an illegal location because the drivers were unaware of where they can go. The Task Force member also noted that he saw the buses unloading illegally.
- A Task Force member confirmed with Reed that these buses were parked illegally.
- Reed encouraged the Task Force to use Call.Click.Connect and to contact parking enforcement when they became aware of violations.
- T&ES Director Yon Lambert encouraged the Task Force to call parking enforcement and the police non-emergency number to address motorcoach violations.
- A Task Force member noted that the business community can do their homework to get information out; however, information is not always passed from the company to individual operators.
- Officer Jerry Newcomb noted that the best avenue to deal with motorcoach is to call the non-emergency number; Officer Newcomb noted that violations cannot be ticketed if police do not see the violation first hand.
- Reed reported the peak utilization and time of peak utilization for the four different parking sites, noting that Swann Avenue capacity was fairly underutilized during the study period.
- A Task Member asked the distance of Swann Avenue from Old Town; T&ES Acting Transportation Planning Division Chief Steve Sindiong noted that the location is between 2-3 miles away from Old Town.
- Reed noted that Masonic Memorial has the potential to absorb a significant amount of parking as parking was underutilized during the sample period.
- Reed noted the major takeaways regarding the study locations. This included the following staff and commission driven-discussion points.
 - o Swann Avenue is underutilized, potentially due to a lack of amenities, distance to Old Town, or lack of advance registration, which is required at other sites.
 - o A Task Force member asked about traffic congestion in relation to the operations of motorcoaches, noting that the it would seem to him the most beneficial to have motorcoaches travel the least distance from loading/unloading points.
 - o Reed noted the evaluation criteria factor in volumes, as well as distance to other locations.
 - o Reed noted that Masonic Memorial is underutilized.
 - o A Task Force member asked the about having to park at Masonic Memorial and its relation to time spent traveling on King Street to reach load-generating points.
 - o Another Task Force member responded that, from the operators' perspective, it would depend on how long and concrete the waiting period is between drop-off and pickup.
 - o There was discussion about the existing benefits of Masonic Memorial. Two Task Force members agreed that this location is most beneficial for its overnight parking.
- A Task Force member asked if staff was able to determine which businesses the buses were connected with.
 - o Reed responded that some businesses were known as connected with surveyed buses, but in cases when such information was not reported in the operating system, the information was not available.
- A Task Force member noted that education for new City staff about loading/unloading and parking locations needs to be a component for recommendations.

- T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted explained how non-emergency coordinates with other City staff and responds to City calls, and noted that the City is looking at a global information system for City staff to respond to calls.
 - Chair Klejst asked that staff share an information or fact sheet with those in operations who receive calls.
- A Task Force member asked if information is captured somewhere when a call is placed, but the citizen cannot wait to receive an officer or a bus moves from the location of the violation.
 - Director Lambert noted that if a call is placed, there will be a record of the call, but if an officer does not see a violation no ticket will be issued and no ticket will be placed.
 - A Task Force member noted that these call are important, and wondered if there was a way to capture calls or record information. The Task Force member was particularly interested in response time.
 - A Task Force member asked if information is distilled.
 - Director Lambert notes that these calls would, as of now, be lumped in with parking enforcement. The information requested would need to be addressed by the Department of Emergency Communications.
 - A Task Force member asked if parking complaints could be further distilled or coded.
 - Chair Klejst asked that Department of Emergency Communications staff make a brief presentation to the Task Force.
 - A Task Force member concurred that this would be an additional use of time.
 - A Task Force member noted that she has called various times, but has never had the opportunity to see a violator receive a ticket.
- A Task Force member asked about the deputization of “good people” to catch buses before they leave a situation, and detailed a situation describing where an operator admitted that there was no incentive to do the right thing. The Task Force member described a potential “bus warden” program and posed the question about whether such program would be possible.
 - Director Lambert noted that the City has a pilot ambassador program, and notes that the City feels it is important for enforcement staff to be focused on working with motorcoach operators.
- A Task Force member asked if he could share pictures about particular violation locations. Director Lambert responded that pictures could be passed along, and they would be shared with enforcement staff.
- A Task Force member noted that all members were in need of more information, and suggested comparison studies with other cities, such as Williamsburg.
- Reed responded that such studies were done in previous Task Force efforts. Reed noted that comparisons could be made for local areas, such as DC.
- Acting Division Chief Steve Sindiong noted that we would discuss enforcement policies at future meetings.

Discussion of Evaluation Criteria (Steve Klejst)

- Chair Klejst described the evaluation for the Task Force for each of the four buckets.
- The Task Force discussed the merits of “the proximity to median age within a mile buffer,” and noted that at the time of voting, this criteria could be amended.

Public Comment #1 and Task Force Discussion (Steve Klejst)

- Chair Klejst opened the first public comment period, which was intended to gather information about the evaluation criteria.
- The first comment was from Carl Smith of 200 Duke Street. His question was about the routing of buses.

- Reed noted that the City does not have charter authority, and noted that loading and parking can be strategically located to influence the route.
- Director Lambert noted that the City does have the ability to regulate traffic via enforcement efforts.
- Ms. Druri [spelling may be incorrect as individual did not sign the sign-in sheet] of 1030 North Royal Street commented on the potential of parking at the NRG site, and commented on motorcoach operations on N. Royal and N. Pitt Street. She noted that North Royal is slated to be a bicycle route, and would that it would not make sense to mix bicycles and motorcoaches. Ms. Druri also noted concerns about pedestrians crossing to access parks, the farmer's market, and also also cited concerns about the interaction of motorcoaches and individuals with limited mobility. On Pitt Street, Ms. Druri noted that the Harris Teeter traffic and future Edens traffic could be a problem. She requested the consideration of another site.
- Reed noted that interactions with bicycles is a location consideration that is subsumed by the evaluation criteria.
- Phillip Mattis [spelling may be incorrect as individual did not sign the sign-in sheet] at 219 N. Pitt Street noted that, generally speaking, bus traffic has increased and routing has become more varied. Mattis noted that many buses do not stop, and that the City does not see economic benefits of bus traffic. Mattis noted that buses take 13-17 minutes to travel through town, and discussed locations where the City could have previously obtained site control parking. Mattis suggested the staff needed to have a vision for parking. Mattis detailed a story of an interaction with a driver, as well as noted that the 100 Block of Lee Street commonly has problems. Mattis reiterated the need for a visions, and suggested that the City should draft a policy statement to pursue an off-site location with shuttle services into the Old Town. Mattis noted that buses should not be allowed on Union Street. He also recommended looking at Savannah and Charleston.
- Steven Thayer of the Torpedo Factory Condominium Association spoke about loading and unloading. He noted that unloading is quicker, and that loading takes more time due to logistics. Idling at this time is bothersome for residents. He noted that unless complaints are enforced, rules and regulations mean nothing. Mr. Thayer noted that data should be collected in cases where violation citations cannot be issued so that staff may send written correspondence to companies warning them of violations. Mr. Thayer noted that he has not seen parking enforcement operating at night, and that support is needed for enforcement.
- Jan Griffinburg [spelling may be incorrect as individual did not sign the sign-in sheet] on S. Pitt Street noted that the criteria regarding access to amenities and bathrooms made it seem like locations had been pre-determined. She noted that the criteria about on-street parking being affected would impact the potential loading locations on Royal. She also noted that the "ease and viability of enforcement" criteria should be emphasized due to the issue being highlighted by the Task Force's discussion.
- A Task Force member asked if staff has data about the number of buses coming into Old Town, and was referred to the data volume information provided during meeting one.
- One Task Force member noted that the graphs and charts on the reservation system don't capture the buses who do not stop.
- T&ES Director Lambert noted that the reservation system data is the best data we have, and that he was unsure of where individuals suggesting they can quantify trips into Old Town without stopping were sourcing their information.
- A Task Force member noted that if a given operator does not care about the rules, he or she would not make a reservation; thus, the reservation system does not present a full picture of bus operations in the City.
- A Task Force member representing the industry noted that he is less aware of the rule in Alexandria than the rules in DC, and emphasized enforcement efforts in DC. He continued, noting that the Task Force should consider how buses support the local economy.

- Chair Klejst stated that the awareness issue was discussed at the first meeting, and the issue should be carried forward through discussions to make sure it does not get lost so staff can improve awareness.
- A Task Force member indicated that a system needs to be easy to comprehend, simple, and accessible.
- A Task Force member indicated that he would not be upset if fewer buses entered Old Town, particularly during busy seasons.
- Chair Klejst noted that balance is important, and hopefully positions will be developed that address the concerns of the group.
- A Task Force member suggested that typical marketing platforms use the rule of seven (seven times, seven different ways). She also noted that ambassadors are important, and that the City should not rely solely on the website.

Evaluation Criteria Prioritization (Patrick Reed)

- T&ES staff member Patrick Reed led the staff through an exercise to weight Task Force evaluation criteria, and detailed how voting would be used to create scores that will compile the Task Force's recommendations.

Review of Potential Motorcoach Parking Facility Sites

- Staff member Patrick Reed introduced the last part of meeting, noting that the list that would follow was not indicative of the City's interest or preference in a particular site.
- Acting Transportation Planning Division Chief Steve Sindiong noted that the list did not include all sites that staff had looked at; for example, Hoffman had been explored, but ultimately was removed based on outreach with the property owner.
- A Task Force member asked about the viability of the Wilson Bridge as a potential parking location. T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted that, as a federal structure, there are regulations in place based on security concerns. A Task Force member noted that the City's ability to request parking under the bridge was affected by 9/11. Director Lambert stated that the City has made special arrangements for parking there during special events, but all parked vehicles require searches and are subject to searches, limiting the feasibility of parking under the bridge.
- Reed detailed the locations under review.
- The Task Force discussed the shuttle bus option, noting its expense and the added time that this option would add for passengers was significant.
- As Savannah and Charleston had been discussed, T&ES Director Yon Lambert noted that in previous Task Force efforts, the Deputy City Manager from Charleston spoke to the Task Force to explain that their regulatory framework was significantly different.
- Two Task Force member noted their support for Regal Cinemas, but had differing opinions about the importance of shelf-life in relation to future parking spaces.
- A Task Force member asked about accessibility to the NRG site. Reed noted that the site is not accessible from Slaters Lane; the member noted that this would not be desirable and it would force traffic on Pitt and Royal Streets.
- The Task Force asked about bus parking in relation to specific times of day. In particular, the Task Force was interested in whether or not staff believed the Jamieson location was proposed for all hours, or only some hours, of the day.
- A Task Force member asked about the condos adjacent to Jamieson. Reed noted that outreach was done for the HoA, and the HoA president responded noting no concerns. Director Yon Lambert noted that the location had been examined previously, and was not approved due to public concern. Reed noted that the turn from Jamieson onto West is doable, but would require the addition of a stop sign on West.

Public Comment (Steve Klejst)

- Wellington Watts, a local business owner, noted his concerns with the shuttle service concept, particularly if the satellite site is too far away. Mr. Watts had concerns about the number of shuttles that would be needed. Mr. Watts suggested a big-picture approach that make Old Town more tourist friendly without affecting residential properties. Mr. Watts discussed the potential at Robinson Terminal North and loading/unloading on N. Union away from residential structures, creating a circuit. Mr. Watts acknowledged issues about buses and their effect on residential properties, and suggested looking at locations that would be away from residential properties without negatively affecting the tourism industry.
- A Task Force member weighed-in on the problems around Robinson Terminal North, and suggested that due to redevelopment, the proposal would be met with much resistance.
- Another Task Force member noted that the buses are a nuisance.
- Ms. Druri [spelling may be incorrect as individual did not sign the sign-in sheet] suggested that some construction could be done to allow access to NRG at the northern side of the site to help buses avoid Old Town.
- A member of the public noted that we should focus on east-west connections, and that perhaps Pendleton may provide the best east-west access. This individual also question the amount of how much revenue buses provide in contrast with any revenue that is lost due to parking.

Final Comments (Steve Klejst)

- Chair Steve Klejst made final comments and addressed scheduling. The Task Force discussed conflicts with the Waterfront Monitoring meeting. Staff responded that they would coordinate with the Monitoring Group liaisons.
- Chair Klejst again posed the question related to a Vice Chair. There being no interest, Chair Klejst adjourned the meeting at 9:04pm.