

Arlington Transit Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
January 15, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
“Cherry” and “Dogwood” Conference Room

TAC Members Present:

John Carten
Erika Chiang
James Davenport
Herschel Kanter
Takis Karantonis
Richard Price
Andrew McAllister

Attendees Present:

Lynn Rivers (staff)
Pierre Holloman (staff)
William Jones (staff)
Tim Roseboom (staff)
Diana Isaza (staff)

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Introductions

- Pierre Holloman introduced Diana Isaza, Project Manager within the Transit Bureau.

Public Comment

- No public comments submitted, no speakers from the public.

Approval of Meeting Notes from

- November 13, 2018 meeting notes were approved unanimously.

WMATA Budget Update – Tim Roseboom

- Tim Roseboom noted that WMATA will hold three public hearings on the proposed FY2020 Operating Budget and the proposed FY2020-2025 Capital Improvement Program and Strategic Plan. The first public hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 29, 2019 at the Metro headquarters building, the public hearing will begin at 6:00 pm. The second public hearing will be held on Wednesday, January 30, 2019 at the Durant Arts Center in Alexandria and is slated to begin at 6:30 pm. The final public hearing will be held on Thursday, January 31, 2019 at the Greenbelt Library and will begin at 6:30 pm.
- The proposed FY2020 Operating Budget’s goals include increasing ridership, improving customer experience, maximize operating efficiency, increasing non-fare revenues, enhancing employment engagement and development, and complying with

dedicated revenue restrictions. The proposed FY2020 Operating Budget includes a proposed subsidy of \$82.3M for Arlington, longer span of peak hour service, elimination of the turnback on the Red Line and on the Green Line, and administrative cuts.

- The proposed FY2020 Capital Improvement Program and Strategic Plan assumes Federal grant funding will continue to be appropriated at a level consistent with FY2019, totaling \$2.9B over six years. The projection also assumes Congressional reauthorization of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA). If PRIIA funding does not continue, jurisdictional funding will need to increase by nearly \$750M to meet WMATA's capital needs. The proposed capital budget also includes \$80.8M in locally requested investments, also known as reimbursable projects, which will be fully funded by the respective sponsoring entity.
- There will be committee hearings on the proposed budget in February 2019 and the WMATA Board is expected to adopt both the FY2020 Operating Budget and the FY2020 Capital Improvement Program and Strategic Plan in March 2019.
- The TAC inquired about the what has the best potential to impact ridership and there was discussion on how 8-car trains and an enhanced rider experience would both win people back. It was noted that during am and pm peak hours, many 6-car Orange, Silver, Yellow, and Blue line trains through Arlington are jammed packed. The TAC also inquired about WMATA's maintenance efforts and if there will be more construction and shutdowns in the future. Mr. Roseboom noted that during the summer of 2019, WMATA will shut down the Blue and Yellow Line south of Reagan National Airport from Memorial Day to Labor Day to complete necessary platform work at stations in Alexandria. Mr. Roseboom also noted that WMATA is working to develop a bus bridge and is coordinating efforts for providing bus services to and from Alexandria and portions of Fairfax County through NVTc. The TAC wanted to know more about the proposed opening of Phase II of the Silver Line. Mr. Roseboom stated that WMATA still anticipates that Phase II will open sometime in calendar year 2020.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Budget Update – Pierre Holloman

- Pierre Holloman stated that in December 2018, the VRE Operations Board recommended VRE's FY2020 Operating and Capital budget to both NVTc and PRTC. VRE's FY2020 Operating and Capital budget totals \$154.2M and includes a 3% average fare increase. Through a projection of 18,700 daily riders, VRE is projecting their fare revenue to be \$43.8M. Jurisdictional subsidies within the FY2020 Operating budget remained at \$17,767,748, the same as in FY2019. The FY2020 Operating budget supports 32 trains and is balanced. Mr. Holloman noted that the Operating budget of \$89.2M represented an increase of \$0.7M more than in FY2019, and VRE's debt service costs were reduced as a result of VRE's May 2018 refinancing of outstanding debt for the purchase of 60 railcars.
- Regarding the Capital budget, Mr. Holloman noted that in previous years, VRE chose to include several projects in the CIP that were largely or entirely unfunded; however, with the FY2020 Capital budget, VRE decided to remove many of these unfunded projects from the formal six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and instead included them separately in the FY2020 Capital budget document. As the projects move forward and as more reliable cost estimates are developed, such projects may be candidates to move into VRE's formal six-year CIP in future years. Given current cost estimates, full funding of the projects in VRE's FY 2020-FY 2025 CIP (including all costs to complete) will require approximately \$813.5 million. Of this total, \$703.7 million (86.5%) is already committed from a range of federal, state, regional, and local sources (this includes life-to-date funding through FY 2019).

- The TAC inquired about the distance between the existing Crystal City Metrorail Station and the Crystal City VRE station and how close will the future Crystal City Metrorail Station East Entrance will be to the proposed new VRE Crystal City Station. The TAC also held a discussion regarding the role VRE and MARC can play in the future within the Washington and Baltimore region as improvements as part of the Long Bridge and Atlantic Gateway are constructed. The TAC also held a brief discussion about how VRE could provide more frequent trains and weekend service once capacity is expanded over the Potomac River via the Long Bridge Project.

Columbia Pike Transit Stations Update – Diana Isaza

- Diana Isaza stated that work is moving forward with the Columbia Pike transit stations project. The project includes 23 new transit stations along Columbia Pike. The project is being developed in coordination with the Columbia Pike multimodal improvements and will support bus service operated by WMATA and ART as well as high density, mixed-use redeveloped along Columbia Pike. The project is broken into 5 phases. Phase 1 includes construction of 4 stations: eastbound and westbound Columbia Pike at S Buchanan St, westbound Columbia Pike at S Oakland St, and westbound Columbia Pike at S Glebe Road.
- In terms of project delivery, the project includes two components, above ground structures and below ground infrastructure. Regarding above ground structures, design work for the transit station templates have been completed and the County is currently in an open procurement process for the fabrication and delivery of such structures. Regarding the below ground infrastructure, the County has developed site specific plans for the Phase 1 stations and is currently reviewing the 100% plans. The County is looking to have a general contractor on board by late spring / summer 2019 to start construction of the Phase 1 stations. Phase 1 construction is expected to be completed in calendar year 2020.
- The Columbia Pike transit stations will feature glass windscreen panels, glass roof, LED lighting, benches and lean bars, station signage, real time transit information screens with audio push button functions, 9.5-inch high platforms for near-level boarding, and trash and recycling receptacles. The stations will also be constructed to accommodate two 40' transit buses. There will be opportunities to incorporate public art on the roofs of the transit stations pending funding.
- The TAC inquired about the funding sources which will be used to construct this project. Ms. Isaza noted that Federal Transit Administration and state funds are being used to construct the transit stations. The TAC questioned the functionality of the stations and asked why there wasn't a side panel on both sides. The TAC also asked why couldn't the Columbia Pike transit stations look like the transit stations installed in Crystal City, noting that having separate designs are not sustainable in the longer term and there is no cohesion on how each the CCPY and service on Columbia Pike interacts with one another. Lynn Rivers noted that there was an extensive public outreach campaign in 2014 and 2015 with the community regarding the design of the station; moreover, it was noted that the community at the time suggested the single panel and a design unique to Columbia Pike. Ms. Rivers noted that the single panel also allows for a longer queue of passengers at station areas and provides easier access as some portions of sidewalk along Columbia Pike are constrained. The TAC expressed some concern regarding how the transit stations will protect individuals from rain especially if the rain came from the north and west. The TAC also asked about future plans and if the transit stations will extend into Skyline/Fairfax County and having some transit service along Columbia Pike which could provide a direct connection between Ballston via Columbia Pike to Crystal City.

ART Service Update – William Jones

- Due to recent snow events, ART and Metrobus had to modify service. ART operated with a normal level of service through the evening of Saturday, January 12, 2019; however, as conditions worsen ART had to suspend service on the evening of Sunday, January 13, 2019. ART resumed normal service this morning (Tuesday, January 15, 2019).
- ART continues to address service reliability issues and decreasing ridership. In the fall of 2018, ART faced a new challenge as a new WMATA bus facility opened in Fairfax County along Cinder Bed Road. A private contractor won the award to operate such facility. Fifteen ART operators left ART to work for the private contractor at the WMATA Cinder Bed Road facility. This left ART with an operator shortage. As a result, ART's contractor, National Express, developed a sign-on bonus program to recruit new operators. National Express also brought in operators from Ohio to work as there were not enough operators to cover all of ART's routes as a result of the 15 operators leaving within a short time span.
- ART also continues to deal with maintenance issues. Although ART's average fleet age is 6 years, there are 13 buses which are 13 years old and near the end of their useful life. National Express has conducted several recent maintenance campaigns to ensure buses are ready for service. Such campaigns have worked as the number of downed buses have decreased from 17 to 10 since the campaign began.
- The County continues to hold frequent meetings with National Express to discuss resolutions to issues which have plagued ART. Mr. Jones noted that the decrease in ridership is route specific and reliability plays a significant role. Mr. Jones that reliability on certain routes have been an issue on several routes.
- The TAC noted issues regarding reliability on the ART 55 and ART 62 as buses do not come as scheduled or are late or early. The TAC also asked about the status of getting a new contractor. Mr. Jones noted that staff is working on a solicitation which will include performance measures. Mr. Jones also noted that ART is hoping to order 14 new buses by spring 2019 which will then be delivered to the County in the spring / summer of 2020 or sooner.

STAR Service Update (combined with the Report from Accessibility Subcommittee) – William Jones

- William Jones noted that staff presented STAR's service evaluation to the Accessibility Subcommittee in December 2018. The evaluation reported on what STAR is doing in terms of performance, comparing FY2017 to FY2018. In FY2018, over 78,000 rides were scheduled on STAR; however, 14% of such rides were no shows or cancelled. A total of about 95,000 passengers utilized STAR in FY2018, which includes personal care attendants, which was a slight decrease as compared to FY2017. STAR carried about 2 passengers per hour and had a cost recovery of 21.5% in FY2018. Regarding complaints, in FY2018, STAR had 7.5 complaints per 1000 passengers, an increase in comparison to FY2017 which Mr. Jones noted was attributed to Red Top switching ownership. In FY2018 the number of complaints related to Red Top increased from 5 to 10 per month to 20 to 30 per month right after Red Top changed ownership and their business model. It was also noted that Red Top saw a decrease in ridership in FY2018.
- Regarding Red Top, Red Top has hired drivers and assigned trips to trained drivers who exclusively serve STAR clients.

- The TAC asked if some STAR customers are utilizing Uber and/or Lyft as such trips may be cheaper than utilizing STAR. The TAC also wanted to know how is STAR information being pushed out to the public and if performance metrics can be included on the web. The TAC also asked if there have been a drop in complaints. Mr. Jones noted that there have been a drop in complaints since the spring and summer of 2018.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

- Lynn Rivers noted that the County will submit the Crystal City Metro East Entrance project and the Crystal City Potomac Yard Northern and Southern Extension project as part of the County's state capital grant request.
- The TAC asked if the Columbia Pike Transit Station procurement will go to the Transportation Commission before it goes to the Board for approval.
- The TAC requested an update on the dockless scooter and bike demonstration at the May 2019 TAC meeting

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 12, 2019.