

Arlington Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

January 21, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Ellen M. Bozman Government Center

2100 Clarendon Boulevard

913 Conference Room

TAC Members Present:

John Carten
Erika Chiang
Herschel Kanter
Richard Price
Laura MacNeil
Andrew McAllister
James Davenport

Attendees Present:

Lynn Rivers (staff)
Pierre Holloman (staff)
William Jones (staff)
Katy Lang (staff)

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Introductions

- John Carten led roll call of TAC members present, Arlington staff, and others present within the room.

Public Comment

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

Approval of Meeting Notes from November 12, 2019

- The meeting notes were approved unanimously.

Walk Arlington Presentation

- Katy Lang, the Program Director for Active Transportation for WalkArlington and BikeArlington briefed the TAC on how the TAC can stay in the loop as transit, walking, and biking are modes which go and grow well together. WalkArlington is Arlington's walking education and encouragement program which started in 2009. Transit, walking, and biking are center to Arlington's vision of an equitable transportation system that enhances the overall quality of life for those that live, work, play, and visit Arlington. Programs such as WalkArlington have given Arlington national recognition at the gold level as a walk friendly community and silver level bicycle friendly community. WalkArlington and BikeArlington provide maps and other resources so that people have an understanding on how to get around and connect to transit.
- Seventy-one percent of capital bikeshare trips in Arlington begin or end at transit; moreover, such has implications for how people are getting to transit and how transit facilities can accommodate capital bikeshare and other forms of shared mobility

devices. Other facilities such as sidewalks and sidewalk connections are important especially for individuals who use transit and have mobility challenges. It is important for the TAC, the Transit Bureau, WalkArlington, and BikeArlington to work together to solve accessibility challenges.

- The TAC inquired if scooter trips are cannibalizing capital bikeshare trips; however, there has not been good data on this. It was noted that some walk trips have been cannibalized through Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). The TAC asked if there was some confusion with the new scooter rules and what was permissible for scooters and bikes. It was noted that scooters and other shared mobility devices were not allowed on National Park Service trails; however, such were allowed on Arlington trails. The TAC also asked what the thought was behind having a shared mobility hub around transit stops and stations. It was noted that parking corrals for shared mobility devices (marked with a P) have been installed at several locations throughout Arlington and are near transit stops and stations.
- The TAC also inquired if WalkArlington and BikeArlington are working closely on Arlington's Vision Zero plan. It was noted that representatives from the Commuter Services Bureau attend Vision Zero stakeholder groups and have provided a lot of input and the Commuter Services Bureau has a lot of ownership over Vision Zero. It was also noted that the messaging around Vision Zero should also be provided to those who primarily take the bus, elementary/middle/high school/college students, and those who primarily drive. A TAC member noted that they were pleased to see that Arlington has such a good record in terms of not having as many pedestrian accidents as other localities in the Washington Metropolitan area. Through education and getting everyone involved, such will make Vision Zero a reality in Arlington. It was stated that a Vision Zero open house will be held on January 28 at Washington and Liberty High School with the program starting at 5:00 pm and ending at 8:00 pm.
- The TAC inquired about the bike facility at the East Falls Church Metrorail Station as the project was supposed to be completed in 2015 and current signs at the station say that the facility was supposed to be completed in 2018. The TAC asked if such facility would be open in time before the East Falls Church Metrorail Station is closed during the summer of 2020. It was noted that WMATA has had numerous of quality issues with various contractors. WMATA cut ties with its first contractor approximately four years ago. WMATA's second contractor did not meet its quality control standards. WMATA has noted publicly that it hopes to have the project completed over the next few months with a completion date TBD.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE) FY2021 Budget Update – Pierre Holloman

- Pierre Holloman stated that on December 20, 2019, the VRE Operations Board recommended a FY2021 Operating and Capital Budget which totals \$163.9M. There were no changes to passenger fares and VRE projects an average daily ridership of 18,900 which is expected to generate annual fare revenue of \$44.1M. The FY2021 budget includes a 3% increase in total subsidy contribution over FY 2020 levels, resulting in a total subsidy of \$18,300,780 across VRE's nine jurisdictional partners. Arlington's subsidy will be about \$218,220. VRE's FY2021 operating budget of \$91.4 million represents an increase of \$2.2 million or 2.4% over the FY 2020 operating budget and includes additional 5 new full time VRE employees and track access fees. VRE's FY2021 - 2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will require approximately \$836 million to complete. Of this total, \$729 million (87%) is already committed from a range of federal, state, regional, and local sources.

WMATA FY2021 Budget Update – Pierre Holloman & Lynn Rivers

- Pierre Holloman noted WMATA's GM/CEO Proposed FY2021 budget totals \$3.8 billion, including \$2.0 billion of operating expenses and \$1.8 billion of capital program investments. Within the cap, the proposed budget includes:
 - Initiatives to further improve service and the customer experience
 - Increasing non fare revenue to help minimize increase to customer fares and reductions to service levels
 - Enhancing fare options to drive ridership
 - Establishes an Extra Service Fund to support unplanned and unfunded events of regional significance
- The funding for Silver Line Phase 2 operations is not included and will be determined following conclusion of the contracting process.
- Proposed Metrorail Service Changes include:
 - Better Weekend Metrorail Service: Operate Saturday Headways on Sundays
 - Reduce Orange/Silver/Yellow/Green/Blue Line Sunday Daytime headway from 15 minutes to 12 minutes
 - Reduce Red Line Sunday Daytime headways from 8 minutes to 6 minutes
 - Restore Rail Late Night Hours: Add Four Hours of Service Per Week
 - Trains would operate an additional four hours per week staying open 30 additional minutes Monday through Thursday (until midnight)
 - One additional hour on Fridays and Saturdays (until 2:00 AM.)
 - Weekday Early Morning Right sizing: Widen Weekday Headway before 6 AM
 - Increase Weekday headways on all Lines before 6:00 AM from 8 minutes to 12 minutes
 - Expand All Trains to the Maximum Length of Eight Cars (Board Requested)
- Proposed Metrobus Service Changes
 - Better Weekend Metrobus Service Bus service frequency would be improved in two ways:
 - Sunday frequency would improve to match current Saturday service on seven bus lines and Saturday and Sunday frequencies would increase on seven bus lines.
 - Improve MetroExtra Service by extending the hours on four MetroExtra routes and improving service frequency on one route.
- Mr. Holloman noted the following Metrobus service changes have an impact to Arlington:
 - 7A,7F increase Sunday frequency to match Saturday (30 minutes)
 - 23B,23T increase Sunday frequency from 60 minutes to 30 minutes
 - 16Y Extend am peak period 1 hour to 10:00 am, extend pm peak period 1 hour to 8:15 pm
 - 3A Eliminate entire line (low ridership)
 - 15K Eliminate entire line (low ridership)
 - 16C Eliminate segment from Pentagon to Downtown (redundancy)
 - 16G,16H Eliminate 16G trips and increase 16H frequency to 8 minutes during the peak and convert all 16G trips to 16H trips off peak (redundancy)
 - 22A,22C,22F Eliminate all 22A trips, convert all 22C trips to 22F trips this will eliminate the segment from Wakefield and 24 th St to Ballston and segment through Parkfairfax (Alexandria). Eliminate all off peak service (redundancy)
 - 2A Eliminate last trip each direction (Fri/Sat)
 - 10A,10N Eliminate the last 10A trip in each direction; Eliminate entire 10N (Fri/Sat/Sun)
 - 16E Eliminate AM service between Pentagon and downtown (Sun)

- Lynn Rivers noted there are a number of operational initiatives that are being proposed in addition to WMATA's plan for Phase 2 of the Silver Line. WMATA has tried to keep operations expenses under the 3% cap and with that, regional partners are seeing a lot of operations recommendations related to Metrobus service cuts. It was noted that there has been a push to increase the hours on Metrorail especially on weekends until 2:00 am now that WMATA has moved forward with state of good repair work. It was noted that better rail service was nice but there are tradeoffs associated with that on the bus side. The TAC inquired if WMATA is overall far enough along and out of the state of good repair business. It was noted that WMATA has and will continue to perform state of good repair activities.
- The TAC inquired about WMATA's weekend flat fare proposal. Ms. Rivers noted that WMATA is looking at how many more people can utilize the Metrorail system and that a flat fare provides more benefits for those traveling at a greater distance. However, it was noted that a flat fare will have a revenue impact. Regarding the bus to rail transfer, William Jones noted that it is a good thing; however, there is a revenue impact to local bus systems such as Arlington Transit (ART) as current projections show that ART would lose approximately \$350,000 in revenue as a result of this proposal. The TAC noted that both proposals may be a win-win for everybody overall but such does have implications to Arlington. Ms. Rivers noted that WMATA is also proposing using a surcharge for people paying with cash and/or loading their SmarTrip card with cash on a bus. The thought behind this is that WMATA is trying to speed up bus service and reduce dwell times through incentivizing the use of SmarTrip. Several TAC members noted their experience with bus operators waiting for someone to load cash onto their SmarTrip card on the bus and number of steps and seconds/minutes it takes.
- Ms. Rivers provided a subsidy document to the TAC showing Arlington's subsidy before and after the opening of Silver Line Phase 2. Silver Line Phase 2 will increase WMATA FY2020 Operating Budget and Subsidy by \$23.6M. Arlington's base subsidy for FY2020 is \$78M and is expected to increase to \$80.3M with the FY2020 updated subsidy which includes Silver Line Phase 2 mobilization. Silver Line Phase 2 mobilization includes the hiring of staff, training, and other requirements to operate Silver Line Phase 2. With Silver Line Phase 2, Arlington's subsidy is expected to increase to \$85.5M.
- Ms. Rivers noted that staff will send out the public hearing dates and public open comment dates to the TAC as soon as such dates are announced by WMATA.

Arlington Transit (ART) Transition Update – William Jones

- William Jones noted that on Sunday December 29, 2019, First Transit took over operations maintenance and administration of ART service from National Express. First Transit also took hold of 14 new thirty-five-foot New Flyer buses which were placed into service. The TAC noted that the new buses were really nice, the interior was very appealing, and the change was really appreciated. The 14 new buses replaced 14 ARBOC body on chassis vehicles which had exceeded their useful life. Since December 29, 2019, Transit Bureau staff have conducted service observations to ensure buses were operating on time, operators were following standard operating procedures, and to obtain feedback from passengers. Since December 29, 2019, there have been 12 instances of missed trips. As part of the mitigation strategy for operating along Columbia Pike through the construction zone, a strategic spare bus has been inserted to deal with traffic challenges. As a result, First Transit has been able to maintain 15-minute frequency between buses on ART 41. The TAC noted that that they have witnessed this, and many other positive changes and First Transit has done good job so far. The TAC also noted how the interior of buses have been spotless.
- Mr. Jones noted that about 95% of operators, supervisors, and dispatchers were retained and about 50% of all maintenance staff were retained as part of the First Transit transition. First Transit has also brought in additional operators and staff to help improve

on service effectiveness and efficiency. Overall, service has been good for the first month and the Transit Bureau will continue to monitor service and First Transit. One item which was noted for improvement was communication to the public when incidents occur.

Arlington Transit (ART) and STAR Service Update – William Jones

- William Jones noted that Arlington Transit (ART) experienced an increase of nearly 11% in ridership month over month between October, November, and December 2019 compared to the same time in 2018. Overall in FY2020, ART's ridership is up 8.6% compared to FY2019. It was noted that ridership has decreased overall on ART 43 and the Transit Bureau is looking into possible causes such as redevelopment in Crystal City as the ART 43 has been a stable and popular route. The ART 72 remains popular and ridership continues to increase. ART's On-Time-Performance (OTP) has gone down; however, this is based on a variety of factors and the methodology used to see if a trip is on time or not. ART using a 0 early/late to 5-minute late window to measure OTP; however, other systems use a larger window for OTP from several minutes early to 7 to 10 minutes late. Traffic also impacts OTP. STAR ridership in October, November, and December 2019 decreased 7% and STAR's overall ridership for FY2020 is down about 6% as compared to FY2019. Factors on why STAR ridership may be decreasing includes accessibility improvements being made by the Transit Bureau to bus stops, sidewalks, and curb ramps throughout the County which provides access to fix route services; and, it has been noted that some individuals that have utilized STAR in the past have taken trips on Uber and Lyft. Mr. Jones also noted that customer complaints have decreased on both ART and STAR. The TAC noted that moving people from paratransit service to fix route service is a positive.

Report from Accessibility Subcommittee

- William Jones noted that the subcommittee did not meet in December 2019.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

Richard Price noted that Arlington staff member Christine Sherman has been doing a fantastic job with Vision Zero and that there will be an open house on 1/28/20 at Washington and Liberty High School from 5 pm – 8 pm which will allow for more community input

Andrew McAllister asked if Arlington was looking for ways to expand bus service in terms of allowing students to use ART as Arlington busing from a school perspective shrinks each year. Ms. Rivers noted that Arlington Commuter Services promote transit and go out to schools and reach out to parents. It was also noted that Arlington Public Schools is currently doing a pilot by subsidizing the cost of students, teachers, and staff to ride by preloading SmarTrip fares onto SmarTrip and iRide SmarTrip cards.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2020.