ALEXANDRIA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FY 2017 - FY 2022

November 2016

Executive Summary

Introduction/Background

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) requires that all transit agencies in the Commonwealth receiving state funding complete a Transit Development Plan (TDP) every six years. This document is the first full Transit Development Program (TDP) for the City of Alexandria and includes an operating and capital needs assessment for local DASH fixed route service, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail and Metrobus service within Alexandria, as well as other public transit entities operating in the City.

This document thus summarizes the key documents describing the City's transit system now, and used such official documents as the City's Capital Improvement Program and TIP to identify possible new facilities and programs which might be provided by the City through its transit partners over the next six years. This is a necessary prerequisite for the City to obtain any funds from the Commonwealth's Department of Rail and Public Transportation to partially fund some of these efforts. It is important to note that this plan, along with its funding plan, is a policy guidance document. Any funding changes would need to go through the City's budget process.

Typically the TDP covers a single transit agency but this TDP covers all public transit operators within Alexandria, given the wide range of providers within the City.

The TDP contains eight chapters, with chapters 1-3 primarily focused on current conditions for each transit operator in the City while chapters 4-8 focus on future conditions, including desired service expansions and the funding required to support expansions.

Public transportation providers covered in the TDP include:

- Alexandria Transit DASH
- City of Alexandria DOT paratransit service
- King Street Trolley
- WMATA Metrobus and Metrorail
- Virginia Railway Express

Chapter 1 – Overview of Transit System

This chapter provides a description of each public transportation provider in Alexandria. For DASH and Metrobus service, hours of service and service frequency for each route are summarized, with system maps for each provided. For DOT paratransit service, hours of service, service area, and eligibility requirements are summarized. For VRE and Metrorail, a general description of each service is provided.

Chapter 2 – Goals, Objectives, and Standards

This chapter summarizes the City's public transportation goals and objectives as well as WMATA and DASH service standards. These summaries provide an understanding of the guiding framework for public

transportation in the City and thus also a framework for the City's future public transportation needs and requirements.

Chapter 3 – Service Evaluation

This chapter contains a detailed evaluation of existing service within Alexandria. Some key points identified in the analysis include:

- Peer Analysis – DASH was compared against comparable transit agencies relative to cost of service, cost effectiveness and productivity. DASH performed very well, ranking first or second in all evaluation categories relative to peers.

- Service Coverage – Nearly the entire City of Alexandria has access to a transit service, based on a ¼ mile walk shed. This coverage generally remains consistent over the entire week, including weekends.

- Hours of Service – Hours of service on DASH and Metrobus are robust and reflect the urban nature of the City. No major deficiencies with hours of service were identified.

- Service Frequency – In many instances service frequencies on both DASH and Metrobus did not meet generally accepted standards for an urban area and are not robust enough that a person could arrive at a stop and be assured a bus would arrive in a reasonable amount of time.

- Transit Coverage of Major Trip Flows – A detailed analysis of potential unmet transit demand was completed in this chapter. This analysis consisted of evaluating transit coverage of major trip flows into major activity centers within Alexandria, from Alexandria to regional activity centers outside the city, and within Alexandria. The analysis showed that, overall, major trip flows to, from and within Alexandria are generally well served by transit. Of note is that the West End Transitway will serve many of the major trip generating portions of the City.

Chapter 4 – Service Expansion Projects

This chapter summarizes public transportation projects that have been identified for potential implementation within the City. Key service expansion initiatives include:

- DASH service expansion – DASH completed its Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) in 2014. The COA identified a range of improvements including:

  - Service and route restructuring in Old Town to create a more customer friendly route structure as well as to improve route productivity.

  - Service and route restructuring in the Van Dorn and Beauregard Corridor areas, in conjunction with the West End Transitway.

  - A new circulator in the Eisenhower East area for internal circulation as well as connections to Metrorail Stations

  - Significant improvements in service frequencies in order to make the service more convenient and to reflect the urban nature of the City

- The West End Transitway, a BRT project connecting the city's West End neighborhood to the Van Dorn and Pentagon Metro stations

- Construction of the Potomac Yard Metro station, an infill station to support the redevelopment of the Potomac Yard neighborhood

- Improvements to the Blue Line, such as increasing headways and supporting bus service that operates along the Blue Line corridor

- Potential cost-neutral service modifications on Metrobus service within the City

Chapter 5 – Operations Plan

This chapter outlines those service expansion projects identified in Chapter 4 that are proposed for implementation. Two funding scenarios for DASH, one very conservative relative to amount of funding that would be available to support expansion, and one with a little more robust growth assumptions, were utilized for this analysis.

Under the conservative assumptions, no DASH service expansion would occur. Under the more robust scenario, service frequency improvements would occur on the AT1 on both weekdays and weekends but there would be no other improvements.

On Metrobus, one potential cost-neutral service change was identified. This would involve service cuts on the 9A Line and the utilization of the savings to improve service on the 10B and 29 Lines.

DOT paratransit service is meeting all trip demand and therefore there are no recommended changes in DOT service levels.

Chapter 6 – Capital Improvement Program

This chapter outlines capital improvements to support existing and potential future service expansions. Key capital items include:

- Improvements to Metrorail Stations and bus stops
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and additional passenger information and operations control capabilities based on the AVL foundation
- DASH fleet replacements
- DASH fleet expansion to support service expansions
- Electronic fare payment improvements
- High Capacity corridors including West End Transitway and Duke Street corridor
- Potomac Yard Metrorail station

Chapter 7 – Financial Plan

This chapter outlines the financial plans that were used as a framework for understanding what funding would be available to support existing service and potential service expansion for each operator. This includes subsidy growth assumptions and assumptions about increases in operating expenses.

Chapter 8 – TDP Monitoring and Evaluation

Co-ordination with Other Plans and Programs

Transit is an important component of many development and redevelopment projects that are either planned or underway in Alexandria. As described in Chapter 3, the success of these redevelopment projects will rely on a robust transit system that reflects the urban characteristics of Alexandria.

This chapter emphasizes that City land use planning and economic development staff continue their already rigorous co-ordination with transportation staff in order to ensure that the transit components necessary to support the ongoing redevelopment of the City are fully addressed.

Service Performance Monitoring

Chapter 2 identified proposed service standards for DASH related to productivity and cost-effectiveness. These standards are objective measurements that DASH can use to monitor transit performance and to assist in making performance-based service planning decisions. It is recommended that DASH monitor these proposed standards monthly and also develop trend analysis to determine if there are major changes in performance over time. These monthly reports can also be rolled up to annual report that can be included in the required annual update of this TDP. (Note: This Transit Development Plan is a 6-Year Planning Document. DASH produces a TDP as well, but DASH's document is a Transit Development Program for one year. The City's TD Plan provides guidance for DASH's TD Program).

Annual TDP Monitoring

DRPT guidance currently requires that grantees submit an annual TDP update letter to DRPT that describes the progress that has been made toward implementing the adopted TDP. If actual implementation of the TDP differs greatly from what has been outlined in the adopted plan, a more thorough update to the TDP than the simple update letter may be warranted.

The update letter to DRPT should document the implementation progress of the service expansion and service initiatives outlined in the TDP, and should also report the ridership impacts of any implemented projects.

The update letter should also describe any changes to system goals, objectives or service standards. Finally, the letter should outline whether additional expansion projects have been added or removed based on changes in funding availability and the associated changes in the financial plan.