



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Competitive Grant Applications to the Virginia Department of Transportation and Department of Rail and Public Transit for Transportation Projects Eligible Under House Bill Two.

ISSUE: Consideration of Competitive Grant Applications to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT) for Transportation Projects Eligible Under House Bill Two (HB2).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Authorize submission of \$16.3 million in HB2 transportation grant applications to VDOT and DPRT for the following projects (projects would be submitted individually and prioritized in the following order):
(1) \$1.8 million for DASH technology, (2) \$1.0 million for traffic signal communications infrastructure for Eisenhower Avenue,
(3) \$7.0 million for adaptive traffic signal controls, (4) \$6.0 million for Old Cameron Run Trail and (5) \$500,000 for the Farrington Connector Feasibility Study; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: In 2014, HB2 was signed into law. The law requires the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to develop and implement a quantifiable and transparent prioritization process for making funding decisions for capacity enhancing projects within the six-year improvement program. The goal of HB2 is to ensure the state invests limited tax dollars into projects that meet critical transportation needs. For FY 2017 through FY 2022, there is \$500 million available for high priority projects statewide, and \$100 million available for the Northern Virginia District.

Over the summer, staff from VDOT and DRPT developed and refined a competitive application process for

HB2 grants. The process was completed in July and the application period for projects opened August 1 with all applications due by September 30, 2015. After applications are submitted, staff from VDOT and DRPT will screen candidate projects to determine if they qualify to be scored. Selected projects will be scored in the fall and winter 2015. In January 2016, a list of all submitted projects and their scores will be submitted to the CTB, posted on-line, and will be available for public comment.

In April 2016, the draft Six Year Plan will be released by the CTB, followed by public hearings to gather input. The CTB is expected to make its final decision on which projects to fund through HB2 by July 2016. It has not been determined yet whether the HB2 project application and evaluation process will be conducted annually or biannually, however, the CTB is considering a biannual solicitation.

The CTB will use the following factors to score submitted projects: congestion mitigation, economic development, accessibility, safety, environmental quality, and land use. The Board will assign different weights to such factors based on a project's location within a region of the state. Within Northern Virginia, congestion mitigation is the highest weighted factor at 45%; land use at 20%; accessibility at 15%; environmental quality at 10%; economic development at 5%; and safety at 5%.

DISCUSSION: Staff has developed the following list of projects, in order of priority, based on the guidelines and criteria outlined in the HB2 process. The projects were reviewed by the Transportation Commission at its September meeting and a letter is provided (Attachment 1). The prioritized project list includes:

1. **DASH Technology:** \$1,829,000 requested for critical, technology updates for DASH buses that will improve overall system efficiency and reduce congestion by encouraging transit use. The technology projects include a computer automated dispatch and automated vehicle location system that will provide better information to riders about bus arrival times, automatic voice annunciators, and automated passenger counting systems for DASH buses. The technology projects would also include a smart yard bus tracking system to improve maintenance operations. The technology system includes three primary parts:
 - a. Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Computer Automated Dispatch (CAD), a widely adopted software technology used by transit agencies because it can rationalize operations which result in cost savings, and improved service through provision of bus arrival times and next bus information;
 - b. Automated Passenger Counters (APC) technology for the entire DASH fleet that uses Global Positioning Systems(GPS) to give real time passenger activity locations, which can be used to enhance service efficiency and optimization;
 - c. Automatic Voice Annunciators (AVA) is an automatic stop announcement system that identifies transit stops for the visually impaired rider. The AVA triggers the announcements as it approaches each stop by utilizing signals received from GPS satellites.

Together, these technology improvements seek to improve efficiency of the DASH system in a manner that will reduce congestion, improve accessibility and air quality, and support the City's vision of promoting more transit-oriented economic development.

2. **Traffic Signal Communications Link for Eisenhower Avenue:**
\$1 Million requested to help manage the impacts of the proposed Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and other future new development on Eisenhower Avenue. The new TSA site will require the installation of two new traffic signals which are to be provided by the developer.

Additional communications infrastructure is desirable to connect these new signals with the City's existing traffic signal system. This project would install the following:

- a. Communications conduit and fiber optic cable between Van Dorn Street and Clermont Avenue;
- b. Traffic cameras at key locations along Eisenhower Avenue to monitor TSA and other traffic; and,
- c. Communication network infrastructure to connect the new and existing traffic signals and provide synchronization along Eisenhower Avenue to mitigate the impacts of TSA and future development related traffic.

It should be noted that nearly all of the City's traffic signals are connected by a fiber optic and copper wire network. Connecting these two new signals will enable T&ES staff to remotely change signal timing if warranted. It will also add traffic cameras to the City's existing system. Finally, this new fiber link will be designed to be able to add more uses such as determined needed by the City's future broadband plan. Two City facilities (Station 210 and the Impound Lot) are also located on this proposed route.

3. Traffic Adaptive Signal Control: \$7 Million requested to reduce congestion on the City of Alexandria's transportation network by continuously optimizing traffic signal operation. The current traffic signal control system utilizes 30-year-old control technology and is not capable of adapting to changing conditions that occur on an almost daily basis. This project would:
 - a. Upgrade the central control hardware and software for 250 traffic signals;
 - b. Upgrade the traffic signal controllers in the field;
 - c. Install vehicle sensing technology and cameras;
 - d. Utilize technology to track traffic conditions and collect historical trends; and
 - e. Use adaptive signal control to improve transit operations.
4. Old Cameron Run Trail: \$6 Million requested to increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in an area of the City where new development and population growth is occurring. The project would construct a shared-use path between Eisenhower Avenue near Telegraph Road to on-road bicycle facilities that link to the Mount Vernon Trail, addressing a major gap in the city's trail system.
5. Farrington Connector Feasibility Study: \$500,000 requested to evaluate the feasibility of the extension of Farrington Avenue in the Eisenhower West Planning Area. The study would assess how this connection would serve future development in the Eisenhower West area, provide increased connectivity, relieve congestion on Van Dorn Street, and increase efficiency of the West End Transitway on Van Dorn Street.

FISCAL IMPACT: HB2 grants do not require any City matching funds. Projects proposed for submission through HB2 must be for either unfunded or under-funded transportation projects, which will be considered as part of the review criteria. With exception of the Old Cameron Run Trail, which is partially funded in the CIP, the remaining four projects are unfunded projects. At the end of October, staff will hold a work session between City Council and the Transportation Commission to generally discuss transportation funding sources and provide an overview of how HB2 and other state/federal grants fund transit and transportation improvements.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Letter from Transportation Commission

Attachment 2: Presentation

STAFF:

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