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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 5, 2014

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER/s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the Receipt of Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Implementation Schedule.

ISSUE: Report to City Council on the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Schedule.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council receive this revised Potomac Yard Metrorail Station implementation schedule (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND: The City is evaluating potential locations for an infill Metrorail station along the Blue and Yellow lines between the National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations to serve Potomac Yard and adjacent neighborhoods. The 1999 Coordinated Development District (CDD) approval for the southern portion of Potomac Yard included the reservation of a site for a potential future Metrorail station.

In 2008, the City began to evaluate land use density and zoning for North Potomac Yard, a process that resulted in the 2010 *North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan*. The plan envisions the replacement of the big box retail-

oriented Potomac Yard Center with a high-density, transit-oriented set of neighborhoods that are connected by a multi-modal transportation network including a new Metrorail station.

The City is currently completing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required under the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA process is required for the Metrorail Station project to maintain eligibility for federal financing and because some of the alternatives may affect the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which is administered by the National Park Service (NPS).

The Draft EIS (DEIS), currently under development, analyzes the socioeconomic, environmental, and transportation impacts of a no build alternative and three build alternatives. The document will address key environmental considerations for each of the alternatives, including air quality and climate change, transportation and land use, visual resources, parklands, historic and cultural resources, noise, vibration, wetlands and habitats, and temporary construction impacts.

As discussed at the December 10, 2013 City Council Work Session, the project team is investigating several options to mitigate impacts identified during the DEIS analysis. One of these options, undertaken at the request of NPS, involves studying the feasibility of moving CSXT commercial railroad tracks westward onto the North Potomac Yard property. Moving the tracks would potentially allow Alternative B to be removed from NPS-owned land and the 1999 scenic easement. City staff met with representatives of CSXT on November 13, 2013. After NPS raised this issue last spring the City retained engineering experts who subsequently determined that moving the railroad tracks westward is technically feasible from an engineering perspective. The City is still waiting to hear from CSXT whether there is interest in proceeding with this concept. The viability of this mitigation option rests on financial feasibility and the willingness of CSXT to move its tracks. While the City awaits a reply from CSXT, the financial feasibility of all station location options (A, B, CSXT, and D) is being re-analyzed.

PROJECTED SCHEDULE: City Council held a work session on December 10, 2013 and the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG) met on January 6, 2014 to discuss the progress of the DEIS. Based on feedback received at these meetings, City staff has prepared a projected schedule to complete the EIS (Attachment 1). Staff anticipates release of the DEIS document for public review and comment in Fall 2014, with selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in early 2015 and completion of the NEPA process in Fall 2015. It should be noted that the schedule assumes two months for administrative review of the Final EIS, and another two months before Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and NPS each issue a Record of Decision (ROD). Staff has been coordinating closely with our federal partners and therefore believes this schedule is achievable. However, federal review could take less time or longer than assumed.

The Design-Build schedule (Attachment 2) projects that completion of the Metrorail station in late 2018. This timeframe is roughly one year later than previously projected in last year's City Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as the study of the CSXT Option coupled with the FTA revised requirement to include additional detail regarding mitigation options in the DEIS (instead of in the Final EIS) added roughly one year to the prior Potomac Yard Metrorail Station implementation schedule. The CSXT Option, however, would add another year to the construction schedule and additional time would likely be needed for CSXT coordination. In addition, because of existing leases, construction of the CSXT would likely not start until January 2019.

FISCAL IMPACT: The fiscal impact of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station is in the process of being recalculated for all site options under consideration (Alternatives A, B, and D, as well as the CSXT Option). The fiscal impact of each option will be known following completion of the new financial analysis.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Projected Schedule to Complete EIS

Attachment 2 - Projected Design-Build Schedule

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