



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	Consideration of a Grant Application from DASH and the City of Alexandria for the FY 2024 to FY 2025 I-395/95 Commuter Choice Grant Program. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]		
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Attachments:	1. 23-0627_Attachment 1 - Resolution, 2. 23-0627_Attachment 2 - Ridership, 3. 23-0627_Attachment 3 - Route Maps, 4. 23-0627_Attachment 4 - Endorsement Letters, 5. 23-0627_Attachment 5 - Presentation, 6. 23-0627_Final signed resolution - RES NO 3133		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: YON LAMBERT, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Grant Application from DASH and the City of Alexandria for the FY 2024 to FY 2025 I-395/95 Commuter Choice Grant Program. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Should the City seek grant funding for DASH bus services and buses?

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Approve the proposed resolution (Attachment 1) to support the three (3) I-395/95 Commuter Choice Grant application requests for up to \$26.5 million over two years; and

2. Authorize the City Manager to apply for these grant funds and enter into any necessary agreements to accept this grant.

BACKGROUND: The purpose of the Commuter Choice program is to provide funding support for transportation projects that maximize person throughput in the I-395/95 corridor and improve mobility options. The program is managed by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), which oversee the distribution of roughly \$17 million in annual funding from I-395/95 Express Lane toll revenues.

In the first four years of the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program, DASH and the City have been awarded more than \$14 million in funding for two bus service enhancement projects on Line 35 and Line 36A/B. Funding increased the service frequency and hours of operation. As a result of these service improvements, ridership on these routes has increased dramatically on both weekdays and weekends. The graphs in Attachment 2 display a comparison between baseline ridership levels without the I-395 Commuter Choice improvements and the actual daily ridership levels with the service improvements.

DISCUSSION: Staff propose to submit three applications for the FY 2024 to FY 2025 I-395/95 Commuter Choice Grant Program. Two of the applications are “continuation” grant applications that will enable DASH to continue to operate the enhancements in the two corridors that are currently receiving funding. The third project is a capital project that would enable DASH to purchase 100% electric buses to provide additional passenger capacity on Line 35 while also promoting local and regional goals for sustainability and environmental justice. The following projects are being submitted for funding and are listed in recommended order of priority:

Project 1 - Enhanced Bus Service from Van Dorn Metro to Pentagon (Line 35) - \$7,500,000

Project 1 is the proposed priority project (as it was in the first two rounds) and would fund the continuation of the service expansions for DASH “Line 35”, which operates parallel to I-395 in West Alexandria (Attachment 3) and runs every 10 minutes all-day on weekdays and every 15 minutes all-day on weekends.

Project 2 - Enhanced Bus Service from Mark Center to Potomac Yard (Line 36) - \$4,000,000

Project 2 is the second priority project and would fund the continuation of the service expansions for DASH “Line 36A/B”, which operates parallel to I-395 in West Alexandria, Parkfairfax, Arlandria and Potomac Yard (Attachment 3) and runs every 15 minutes all-day, seven days per week.

Project 3 -Bus Purchases for Additional Capacity on West End - Up to \$15,000,000

Project 3 seeks up to \$15,000,000 in funding for DASH to purchase ten large 100% electric buses instead of 35-foot clean diesel buses to support the operation of Line 35. Due to high ridership demand (upwards of 5,000 passengers per day), many Line 35 weekday trips operate with 35-foot buses that are at or above capacity with many passengers standing or, in some cases, being passed up because the bus is too full. Future grant-funded purchases of 40-foot and 60-foot buses will provide additional capacity on the busiest bus route in the DASH system while making the service more attractive with new, accessible 100% electric buses.

FISCAL IMPACT: The City is applying for a combined total of up to \$26,500,000 in grant funding, and since there is no local match requirement, there are no immediate fiscal impacts associated with the application or award of I-395/95 Commuter Choice funds. However, if the City does not receive the requested funding for the first two projects to maintain the current Line 35 or 36A/B improvements DASH would not be able to operate the enhanced service which would amount to a service reduction with significant customer impact.

For Project 3, the purchase of 10 electric buses is intended to align with the City’s bus replacement schedule and will not require any additional subsidy from the City. Electric buses could potentially provide an operation and maintenance cost savings of \$1.5 million over their life compared to clean diesel buses. The purchase of

these buses with grant funds could offset City dollars needed to replace existing buses that will meet their useful life in FY24.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Line 35 and 36A/B Route Maps

Attachment 3: Ridership Graphs

Attachment 4: Endorsement Letters from the Transportation Commission and ATC Board of Directors

Attachment 5: Presentation

STAFF:

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