



Legislation Text

File #: 14-4936, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 23, 2016

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Resolution for Re-concurrence of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the West End Transitway. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of a resolution for re-concurrence of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the West End Transitway.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt a resolution (Attachment 1) for re-concurrence of the LPA for the West End Transitway.

BACKGROUND: On November 17, 2012, City Council approved a resolution adopting a LPA for Corridor C / West End Transitway that proposes Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in dedicated lanes where practicable from the Van Dorn Metro to the Pentagon. The resolution also directed that the analysis during environmental phase should examine service to the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) and consider future potential conversion from BRT to streetcar. The purpose of this requested City Council resolution is for re-concurrence of the LPA. The LPA is required to complete the environmental documentation that will be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in spring 2016. Upon approval of the environmental documentation, the project will become eligible to compete for federal funds. The estimated capital cost of this project is between \$121 million and \$140 million projected to be funded by a combination of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), and federal transit funds, as well as substantial developer contributions.

With the initiation of the Alternatives Analysis, City Council established the West End Transitway Policy Advisory Group (PAG) in 2014 to provide policy and technical guidance related to the Alternatives Analysis (AA) / Environmental Documentation effort required for the project. The purpose of this 2016 re-concurrence resolution is for City Council to establish that the refinements made through the West End Transitway PAG incorporate the desired transit technology, route, and configuration. This will enable the City to proceed with the environmental phase and enter into the federal project development process, which signifies the City's desire to formally pursue federal funding.

City Council has adopted multiple plans and policies leading to the current phase of the project, including the 2008 Transportation Master Plan, the 2009 Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, the 2011 Complete Streets Policy, the 2012 Transitway Corridor Feasibility Study, and the 2012 Beauregard Small Area Plan.

DISCUSSION: The West End Transitway PAG met six times throughout the study process to provide policy and planning guidance to the project team. Each PAG meeting included a public meeting session to facilitate public input and discussion. At the final meeting on December 3, 2015, the PAG voted to adopt a resolution of support for the project (Attachment 2). The resolution recommended that the City advance the refined Build Alternative towards implementation.

The LPA (also referred to as the Build Alternative), shown in Attachment 3, includes dedicated lanes, queue jump lanes, full amenity stations (near-level boarding, real time bus information, and off-board fare collection), transit signal priority, safety improvements at intersections, improved sidewalks, and new bicycle facilities. To enhance access to the North Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), the alternative includes pedestrian safety accommodations at Braddock Road, stations at Fillmore and Braddock, and does not preclude other potential future services from directly serving the main campus. No action is required at this phase of the project regarding conversion from BRT to Streetcar service and, as recommended by the PAG, this will be discussed by the Transportation Commission if and when appropriate. With the Arlington and Fairfax County's Columbia Pike / Skyline streetcar project now canceled, conversion of the West End Transitway from BRT to streetcar is highly unlikely in the short and medium term.

On February 17, 2016, staff presented the PAG's recommendation to the Transportation Commission. Following a public hearing and Commission discussion, the Transportation Commission moved to endorse the proposal for the West End Transitway, including the recommendations of the PAG, in support of advancement to the design phase (Attachment 4).

FISCAL IMPACT: In FY 2016, the City received \$2.4 million in Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) 70% funds to advance the project into the design phase. An application for an additional \$7 million in FY 2017 NVTA fund grants is currently under review by NVTA. If approved, the combined funds will allow the project to advance to the point of releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a design build contract to construct the West End Transitway and acquire a dedicated fleet for bus rapid transit operations.

The capital funding sources for the project, up to \$140 million as shown in the proposed FY 2017 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), include NVTA 70% funds (\$62 million), State grants (TBD), federal grants (\$51 million), and private contributions (\$27 million) from developers along the corridor. Additional contributions from developers include easements and dedication of right of way needed to implement the Transitway project. During the design phase, a detailed financial plan will be developed. Staff will explore all available funding sources, including but not limited to State funds, Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) funds, and other federal transportation funding programs.

Operating funds have been preliminarily identified in the proposed FY 2017 budget through NVTA 30% funds with a proposed 2020 start of revenue service.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: West End Policy Advisory Group Resolution

Attachment 3: Map of West End Transitway Build Alternative

Attachment 4: Transportation Commission Letter of Endorsement

Attachment 5: Presentation

STAFF:

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