



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Mitigation Measures for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Planned Three-Month Platform Reconstruction Closure of Arlington Cemetery Station.

ISSUE: Consideration of the mitigation measures for a three-month Blue Line closure between the Pentagon and Rosslyn Metrorail stations due to closure for platform reconstruction at Arlington Cemetery Station.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the attached letter (Attachment 1) to Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) regarding mitigation for the planned temporary closure of the Arlington Cemetery Station.

BACKGROUND: WMATA's Platform Improvement Project is a multi-year effort to improve the safety of platforms at 20 exterior stations with significant deterioration due to exposure to weather and the agents used during de-icing. This effort is being conducted in four phases. The first phase was the closure of six stations south of National Airport on the Blue and Yellow lines, impacting Alexandria during the summer of 2019. The second phase is being conducted during the summer of 2020 with the closure of four stations at the end of the Orange Line, which is not impacting normal travel in Alexandria. Phase 3, planned for mid-February 2021 to mid-May 2021, includes the Arlington Cemetery Station. This period was selected because it is a lower ridership period for the Phase 3 stations and it avoids the major events held at Arlington Cemetery. With the closure of Arlington Cemetery, trains cannot travel through the station, requiring that rail riders transfer at L'Enfant Station to travel to Blue Line stations in Arlington or District of Columbia.

DISCUSSION: To mitigate the impact of the Arlington Cemetery Station closure, WMATA is planning to run both Blue and Yellow Line service across the Yellow Line Bridge, enabling riders from Van Dorn to not have to transfer twice to get to the Blue Line. It will also reduce wait times for service across the Yellow Line Bridge. City Staff has requested several data sets from WMATA to understand how this will impact our riders including

the number of riders being impacted, origin-destination ridership, and the change in travel times.

Travel Times

With this increased service over the Yellow Line bridge, anticipated travel times from Alexandria stations for stations between Farragut West and Rosslyn will increase by an average of 4 to 12 minutes. Those traveling West of Rosslyn on the Blue/Orange Line will on average experience a 12-minute increase in travel times. Due to more frequent Yellow Line service, travel to McPherson Square or Metro Center will be about the same and travel times to Federal Triangle will decrease (See Attachment 3 for more information).

Passengers Impacted

Looking at pre-COVID 2019 March data, approximately 4,400 passengers traveled from Alexandria to the Blue Line West of L'Enfant Plaza. Of those, approximately 3,200 passengers will experience longer travel times and the remainder will be experiencing the same or faster travel times. All typical Yellow Line riders will see a benefit from the reduced wait times.

Additional Alternatives

City staff have discussed additional alternatives with WMATA, including different shuttle provisions from stations in Alexandria to Rosslyn or a more typical “bus bridge” type shuttle connecting the two stations on either side of Arlington Cemetery (Pentagon and Rosslyn). WMATA has expressed a willingness to consider shuttles proposed by Alexandria. However, given the pre-COVID ridership between these stations, the likely continuation of a reduction in ridership due to COVID, and the travel time differentials between potential shuttles and rail solutions, WMATA and City staff agree that the proposed rail alternative will likely be the preferred alternative for the vast majority of riders.

Alexandria staff also considered Braddock Metro to Rosslyn as one possible shuttle. However, bus travel times would likely be around 20 to 25 minutes during the peak period, assuming similar congestion levels to today and not including wait times. Braddock to Rosslyn on rail would take an average of 27 minutes, including wait times. Therefore, bus frequency would have to be quite high to be worthwhile. Moreover, there were only about 150 average daily riders from Braddock to Rosslyn in March 2019, less than half of whom would be peak period riders. Travel from King Street Station, which has slightly higher ridership, would be relatively comparable, but likely a few minutes slower than from Braddock by bus.

FISCAL IMPACT: WMATA has budgeted for a certain level of travel mitigation in its construction budgets. Therefore, none of the proposed alternatives should result in increased costs to WMATA or the City.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter to WMATA General Manager
2. Average Daily Ridership Between Alexandria Stations and the Blue Line
3. Travel Time Impact
4. Presentation

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES

Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, T&ES

Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, T&ES