Tanya Husick, Project Manager
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DRPT
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
The Smartest Distance Between Two Points

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

UPCOMING PUBLIC WORKSHOP!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2005
7:30 – 9:00 pm

Cora Kelly Recreation Center
25 West Reed Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22205

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria invite you to participate in a workshop to help develop an implementation strategy for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard interim transit plan. The workshop provides an opportunity for you to have a say in bus stop design, amenities, alignment, and operations. Please make a note to join us – the new transit system will work better with the input of those who will use it!

GET INVOLVED!

What are your thoughts about interim transit solutions for the Route 1 corridor in Crystal City and Potomac Yard?

Let us know by writing:

Tanya Husick, Project Manager
Virginia Department of Rail
and Public Transportation
3900 Jermantown Road, Suite 300
Fairfax, VA 22303

Or by phoning the project hotline at
(703) 300-3981

THE CRYSTAL CITY/POTOMAC YARD

TRANSIT CONNECTION

Alexandria and Arlington Team Up on New Transit Project

Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor Interim Transit Improvements Implementation Strategy **Spring 2005**

Project Purpose and Background

Most people in the Washington Metropolitan Area know that Northern Virginia is one of the fastest-growing regions in the U.S. But what isn't commonly known is that the Route 1 corridor of southern Arlington and northern Alexandria is one of the largest tracts of developable urban land in the country. Though it would seem that much of Crystal City and Potomac Yard has been developed already, there are in fact an additional 400 acres in the corridor with a proximity to the business and government centers of Washington and Northern Virginia that makes them prime for development. Because growth is usually accompanied by new transportation challenges, the City of Alexandria and Arlington County are collaborating to develop ways of moving people around the rapidly expanding corridor. Together, with the help of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the two jurisdictions are working on an interim plan to provide greater mobility in the Route 1 corridor.

What's being planned?

Between now and mid-2006, increasing travel demand will be addressed in part through frequent bus service along the corridor. Then, in two to five years, bus service between Crystal City and Potomac Yard will be "enhanced" to boost capacity while cutting travel times. The enhanced transit will be designed in such a way that it will not preclude any long-term, higher capacity options under consideration (Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail, or Metrorail).

See insert for a map of the planned alignment and stops for the interim transit system that will serve the Crystal City/Potomac Yard area along Route 1 in Arlington over the next two to five years.

Crystal City and Potomac Yard Corridor – Interim Transit Improvements Implementation Strategy

This newsletter provides updates on the Crystal City/Potomac Yard transit project that will serve the Route 1 Corridor, which includes Crystal City and Potomac Yard. The project – a joint effort of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the City of Alexandria, and Arlington County – will coordinate resources and implement an interim transit service that sets the stage for a higher-capacity transit service in the future.

IN THE PIPELINE

It will likely take 7 to 10 years for proposed development at Crystal City/Potomac Yard to be completed. Here is a summary of what development is proposed in the next several years:

- Early 2006, Arlington – One and Two Potomac Yard. 622,000 square feet, to have 1,500 Environmental Protection Agency employees, with six additional floors of uncommitted office space. Developer: Crescent Resources.
- Late 2006, Arlington – Eclipse on Center Park and Market Square on Center Park. 465 residential units and 80,000 square feet of ground floor retail, more than half of which will be a grocery store. Developer: Comstock.
- Late 2006, Arlington – Camden Potomac Yard: 379 residential units, 4,120 square feet of ground-floor retail. First units to be leased November 2006. Developer: Camden USA.
- 2008, Arlington – 1.93 million square feet of office space, 40,000 square feet of retail, 402,000 square feet of residential space, and a 625-room hotel. Yet-to-be-named project is currently at the start of the approval process. Developer: Meridian Group.
- 2010, Alexandria – Town Center. 232 residential units, 60,000 square feet of office space, 5,000 square feet of retail. Currently in approval process; may take three or four years to construct, beginning in 2007. Developer: Potomac Yard Development, LLC.
- 2014, Alexandria – Total build-out would include 1,793 residential units, 625 hotel rooms, 1.8 million square feet of office space, and 135,000 square feet of retail. Developer: Potomac Yard Development, LLC.

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 1: Project Purpose and Background, Upcoming Development
Page 2: Prior Studies, Plan Components
Page 3: Enhanced Bus Service
Page 4: How to Get Involved

Transit Implementation Plan

During Phase 1, Alexandria, Arlington, and the property owners in the corridor have been meeting monthly to coordinate a variety of efforts related to the Potomac Yard development. Because development is underway in Arlington, the County is focusing on the immediate development, much of which may be complete by spring 2006. This new development will result in about 2,000 new employees and 1,000 new residents in the Arlington portion of the corridor; therefore, current efforts have been centered around immediate transit improvements that will accommodate the additional employees and residents. Arlington's busway will consist of two exclusive lanes and covered platform stops for public transit buses. The schematic diagram below shows the alignment for the busway and the location for three covered platform stops. The busway will be constructed parallel to but separate from regular traffic lanes.

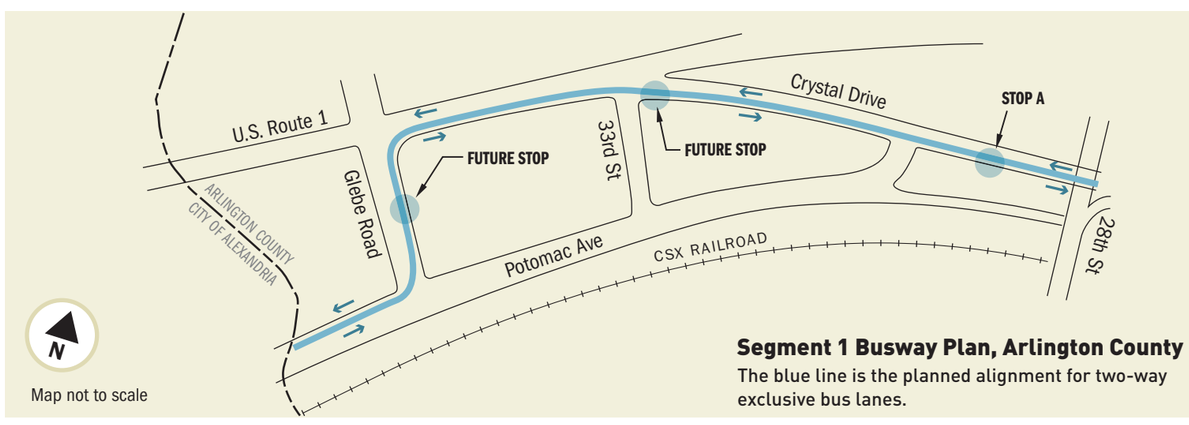
Plans for the Alexandria portion of the corridor will eventually accommodate approximately 5,500 employees and 3,500 residents. Alexandria's planning staff is currently working with the developer on the site plan for Land Bay H, the area adjacent to and north of the Swann Avenue extension. Development in this area will result in the addition of approximately 200 employees and 500 residents. Frequent public meetings and work sessions are being held to ensure that residents' concerns and suggestions are incorporated into the planning process. The first homes in the area should be complete by 200, in the Town Center.

In Phase 2—the focus of the interim implementation strategy—the level of development that is projected will require "enhanced" bus service that can meet a higher level of travel demand and will operate on the exclusive busway in Arlington. It will be desirable as well to implement a service that has an identity unique to the corridor and one capable of meeting longer term increases in travel demand. The service in this phase will operate on an exclusive busway, and could incorporate some of the service and operating characteristics of a rapid bus system (see page 3).

In Phase 3, after build-out of the corridor is finished, development in the corridor may have outgrown capacity of the interim transit service, and travel demand may require a higher-capacity transit mode. At that time, the transition to a higher capacity transit mode will be required. This mode could be heavy rail (Metro), light rail, or Bus Rapid Transit. These options will be explored in future years. The implementation of this phase will likely require additional analysis and documentation to qualify for federal aid.

Prior Studies

There has been much discussion about how to best use the 368-acre former railyard between Route 1 and Reagan Washington National Airport since the facility closed in 1992. In recent years, several studies have recommended new or additional transit for the growing area to complement existing rail and bus service. The Virginia Department of Transportation's 1999 Crystal City/Potomac Yard Area Transportation Study asserted that road improvements alone would not solve the problem of burgeoning traffic in the corridor, and that transit will be required to reduce vehicle trips. In addition, the Northern Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council's Northern Virginia 2020 Plan included construction of a light rail or Bus Rapid Transit line for the corridor, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments have also weighed in on the need for additional transit in the Route 1 corridor. Most recently, in 2003, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation completed an analysis of different transit alternatives, including mode and alignments, for the corridor.



Segment 1 Busway Plan, Arlington County
The blue line is the planned alignment for two-way exclusive bus lanes.

Implementation Plan Components

DMJM Harris, a transportation planning and environmental consulting firm, is helping Alexandria and Arlington to develop an interim transit implementation plan. There are five components of the implementation plan:

- ***Strategy and Schedule***
- ***Operations and Service Plan***
- ***Cost and Funding Plan***
- ***Environmental Reconnaissance***
- ***Station Area Design***

Future project updates will describe activities in these areas. In addition, public input on the implementation plan is welcome and will be solicited at a Public Workshop in June. Details about the workshop are provided on the back of this newsletter.

Defining the Bus Service

Because development is already well underway in the Arlington portion of the corridor, a near-term transit solution will be to increase the frequency of Metrobuses currently serving the area. The increase in service will meet the expected increase in the demand for transit created by the immediate development.

Within two to five years, however, it will be necessary to move to an "enhanced" bus system, which will allow the City of Alexandria and Arlington County to provide improved transit service to meet new demand as development continues in the corridor. The operational characteristics and design parameters of this service are not yet defined for the Crystal City and Potomac Yard Corridor, but could incorporate some of the characteristic of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The City and County are looking for input on this interim service now.

Ultimately, a higher-capacity rapid transit service is envisioned for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard corridor.

Operational Characteristics That Could be Incorporated

A BRT or Rapid Bus system usually provides limited stop service in order to shorten the travel time between points. Stops are typically located 1/4 to 1/2 mile apart and have passenger amenities comparable to the busiest existing Metrobus stops. Both the stops and buses in the new system could have a distinct look to set them apart from the local bus service that will continue to operate in the corridor. Other characteristics of such a system might include electronic signs with real-time bus arrival information for passengers. In addition, traffic signals along the corridor could be equipped with signal priority systems, which can extend green lights for buses or shorten green lights for cross-traffic in order to provide a faster, more reliable trip for bus patrons.

Rapid Bus systems have been implemented around the country. The most extensive system is the MetroRapid network in Los Angeles. Rapid Bus routes also operate in Chicago and Oakland.

Above: *A stop in the Los Angeles Rapid Bus system. Rapid Bus made its L.A. debut in July 2000 and has improved transit quality along several important corridors in the region. The L.A. Department of Transportation reports a total travel time savings of 25 percent and a reduction in delays caused by traffic signals of 33 percent. Also, overall travel speeds for the buses have increased from 11 to 15 miles-per-hour on Wilshire Boulevard and from 15 to 20 miles-per-hour on Ventura Boulevard.*

Below: *A modern streetcar in Portland, Oregon. Streetcar is one of the longer term transit options that may be considered for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard corridor.*