

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2007 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CMAQ) AND REGIONAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (RSTP) PROJECTS

ISSUE: Consideration of the Fiscal Year 2007 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) Projects.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the priority listing of transportation projects discussed below as those CMAQ and RSTP projects for which the City of Alexandria will request grant funding for FY 2007; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to apply for these grants, and give him permission to enter into agreements with the State to accept any of these grants which are provided by the Commonwealth.

DISCUSSION: Every year the Commonwealth allocates Federal CMAQ and RSTP money to our region, which the jurisdictions within the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa) distribute among themselves. This year approximately \$25 million of CMAQ funds will be available and approximately \$42.5 million of RSTP funds. These funds have been allocated since FY 1993 for CMAQ and FY 1994 for RSTP.

CMAQ funds are allocated to regions in the country that are either not meeting Clean Air Act regulations, like the Washington metropolitan region, or are nominally meeting the law, but are in a maintenance status, like Richmond. These funds must be used for activities that improve air quality, and cannot be used to increase the capacity of roadways. Examples of their use include traffic flow management, travel demand management strategies, ride sharing programs, pedestrian and bicycle programs, education and outreach, inspection and maintenance programs, alternative fuels, and public and private partnerships. The air pollution benefits of these projects must be quantified.

In past years these funds have required a 20 percent local match, with the exception of traffic improvements, which are 100 percent funded by the federal government. Beginning in FY 2006, the Commonwealth is providing the 20 percent local match, and this policy will continue in FY 2007.

RSTP funds are flexible funds, which can be used for a wide range of regional transportation activities. These include various road improvements, transit facilities, and transit equipment. These funds must be used for improvements that are regional in nature, rather than local improvements. These funds are also provided with no local match, with the federal government contributing 80 percent of the project funding and the Commonwealth contributing the 20 percent match.

At the end of September 2005, the City of Alexandria will be requested to provide the NVTA a set of candidate projects to be funded by the CMAQ program or the RSTP program.

Seven different projects are proposed, in order of staff recommended priority, for submittal to NVTA for CMAQ or RSTP funding in FY 2007. These projects are briefly described below.

1. Employer Incentive Funds: The City of Alexandria has provided money from a CMAQ funded grant to encourage employers to start a transit benefit program. As an incentive for employers to do this, the City of Alexandria will pay the cost of providing a transit benefit program to employees for up to \$105 per employee for the first six months of the program. The employers agree to continue the program for the rest of the year. This program has been very effective in increasing the number of employers offering transit benefit programs. Since the current grant to fund this activity will be expiring at the end of FY 2006, the City will continue the program through the money it will receive from this grant. We are requesting \$100,000 to continue the employer benefit program.
2. Bus Shelters: WMATA currently owns (but for budget reasons does not adequately maintain or replace) 50 bus shelters in Alexandria, which are all more than 20 years old. While these shelters have been very durable, they are at the end of their useful life. In FY 2006, the City received RSTP money (\$250,000) to replace these worn out shelters and to erect shelters at new locations, where feasible. It is proposed to continue the program of shelter replacement by replacing the remaining 25 shelters with the FY 2007 funds. The City also plans to experiment with methods for providing transit information at these stops for all people, including those with sight and hearing impairments. This effort will be part of the City's renewed efforts to create a quality bus shelter program in the City, which began with money in the City's FY 2005 operating budget to maintain shelters. We are requesting \$250,000 to fund the acquisition and installation of 25 bus shelters.
3. Potomac Yard Transit Improvements: The City is a full participant in a study to develop a transit operations plan for Potomac Yard with the Commonwealth of Virginia and with Arlington County. The City must make substantial transit improvements in Potomac Yard

to make it a transit-oriented development. An existing study, together with other City-sponsored efforts, will determine the location of stops for a bus rapid transit service in the corridor. Additionally, Potomac Yard designs will be developed for stations at these stops. Through a cooperative effort with the developer, the City will invest money from this grant to build some of the bus rapid transit stops. Since the framework infrastructure for Potomac Yard is being designed now and will be built very shortly, decisions will soon be made regarding the cross-section of all streets. One feature being considered is to create a busway in the corridor between the Monroe Avenue Bridge and the vicinity of East Glebe Road. If the decision is made for the City to endorse such a facility, money from this grant will be used in part to engineer and possibly construct part of the facility. Funding of \$1.8 million is requested to accomplish the design and some of the transit improvements in Potomac Yard.

4. Sidewalk and Trail Improvements: The City of Alexandria is recommitting itself to efforts to enhance its transportation system for non-automobile based methods of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and traveling in wheelchairs. This year, the City is using a State-funded transportation grant to assess the infrastructure needed for these methods of travel, and to develop a multi-year program to address the highest priority needs. With this study as a basis, the City will begin to fund a number of improvements with CMAQ funds previously allocated, particularly sidewalks which access transit facilities. With this project, significant improvements will be funded to complete important regional links, to provide updated facilities for people with disabilities, and to rebuild parts of the City's portion of the regional trail system that may be substandard. This project will also provide some funding for a public education campaign in which various materials will be produced and distributed, and other media outlets will be used to indicate the opportunities for walking and bicycling the City can provide, especially as new links come on to the system. We are requesting \$750,000 to fund the design and construction of transportation facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with disabilities.

5. Ridesharing Enhancements: Alexandria's ridesharing program has been in existence for over twenty years, and has shown itself to be an effective way of getting people into vanpooling, carpooling, transit, and other alternative forms of transportation. This grant application is to fund a series of improvements that will make the program more effective in these tasks. One improvement area, which cannot be accomplished with existing level of funding, is the manner in which the Transit Service Office advertises its services and those of other regional agencies engaged in similar activities.

The Transit Services Office designs, writes, publishes, and distributes general and specific new materials about our services. These materials include individualized transit marketing, such as flyers, door hangers, and direct mail pieces. We would like to improve how we produce and distribute ridesharing information, and would like to supplement the efforts of staff with contractual services to redesign the ridesharing web site and to stage more events, such as transit fairs, to encourage use of transportation alternatives. With

contractual assistance, we would also like to increase ridesharing outreach efforts, to include targeting specific areas in which to encourage employer participation in the program, and to pursue alternatives for increasing carsharing options for City residents. Car sharing appears to be an excellent way to encourage transit usage and to discourage the acquisition of multiple automobiles. Funding of \$250,000 of RSTP or CMAQ funds will be requested for this project.

6. Rebuilding King Street Metro Parking Lot and Bus Lanes: In FY 2006, with previously granted funds, the City will engage a consultant to develop a proposed redesign of the King Street Metrorail station parking lot, bus access ways, and stops. The parking lot, bus access ways, and stops do not accommodate the existing number of buses at the stop efficiently, let alone the number of buses that might use the stop in the future. The FY 2006 project will develop a redesign of the bus portion of the facility. The feasibility of erecting a facility that can serve as a transit information center will also be explored as part of the redesign of the bus lanes and parking lot. This application is to partially fund the construction of a new facility and information center designed by the earlier grant, which will better accommodate existing and future buses serving King Street. The City will request that \$1,500,000 be allocated to rebuild the bus access ways, bus stops, and parking lot at this site.
7. Traffic Monitoring Cameras: Traffic in the City is highly variable. Major points of congestion arise very quickly with accidents and other unexpected occurrences having very deleterious effects on major roadways in the City. Since these problems can arise very quickly, it is necessary for the City to get real time gauges of the highway system's performance, in order that resources can be used to minimize the effects of congestion on one street or other streets that intersect with it. The most efficient method of getting this real time information is to acquire traffic monitoring cameras that can report on traffic congestion at specific critical intersections. By doing so, the City will be able to adapt to changing conditions by changing traffic signal timing or dispatching traffic control police to intersections. The City is proposing to initially acquire five traffic monitoring cameras, which together with accompanying infrastructure, should cost \$200,000.

FISCAL IMPACT: The proposed projects do not require local matching funds from the City. The match is provided from the Commonwealth. The projects, requested grant amounts, and sources of funds are listed below.

Project	Federal Funds	State Match	Local Match	Total
1. Employer Incentives	\$ 80,000	\$ 20,000	\$0	\$ 100,000
2. Bus Shelters	\$ 200,000	\$ 50,000	0	\$ 250,000
3. Potomac Yard Transit Improvements	\$1,440,000	\$360,000	0	\$1,800,000
4. Sidewalk and Trail Improvements	\$ 600,000	\$150,000	0	\$ 750,000
5. Rideshare Enhancements	\$ 200,000	\$ 50,000	0	\$ 250,000
6. Rebuilding King Street Metro Parking Lot and Bus Lanes	\$1,200,000	\$300,000	0	\$1,500,000
7. Traffic Monitoring Cameras	\$ 160,000	\$ 40,000	0	\$ 200,000
TOTAL	<u>\$3,880,000</u>	<u>\$970,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$4,850,000</u>

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Re: Item no. 24- CMAC Funds for FY 2007

In considering use of CMAC funds for redesigning the bus facilities at the King Street Metro Station, please make expand the breadth and scope of this effort to be multimodal and consider the importance of pedestrian and bicycle access to the station. There has already been a joint City/WMATA study which showed that the predominant mode of access to the station way by pedestrians yet the pedestrian had the least priority in terms of convenient and safe access to the station. Bicyclists have no clearly demarcated station access and have to lock up the bikes on a

median strip wedged between the kiss/ride lot and the bus lanes without any benefit of weather or security protection for their bikes.

The intersections surrounding the station need to be redesigned to be more pedestrian friendly. The Study should not preclude joint development considerations or other land uses and transit oriented services which could benefit patrons such as a visitor's center, day care center, retail and food services.

Comments:

This public space is too important and serves too many functions to be viewed with too narrow a focus. Urban placemaking should be the goal and the components, transit facilities, walkways, information services, public spaces, taxi and carsharing spaces, bicycle racks, weather protection and aesthetics should support an overall vision of how this space should look and function not only for Alexandrians but as a welcoming entrance to our city for visitors and tourists.

I would ask City Council to ask the City Manager to make this study part of a larger vision for urban placemaking at the King Street Metro Station Parking lot and environs. With this broadened scope of study, all the components necessary to provide a functioning transportation service and an attractive urban space can be considered.

Thank You for Your Consideration

Larry Grossman