

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 3, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION, BUS AND BUS FACILITIES DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM

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**ISSUE:** Proposed grant application in the amount of \$5,000,000 to cover part of the cost of construction of the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- (1) Submit a grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration for Section 5309 funding in the amount of \$4 million, to be matched by City funding in the amount of \$1 million, for implementation of the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transit Corridor; and
- (2) If this application is approved, execute all necessary documents and agreements that may be required to receive this funding under this grant program.

**BACKGROUND:** The Federal government makes funds available to public transit providers to finance capital projects to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including projects for assistance to subrecipients that are public agencies, private companies engaged in public transportation, or private non-profit organizations through the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5309. Generally, all of the funds provided by this program are earmarked by either the multi-year SAFETEA-LU transportation authorizations legislation, or by specific earmarks assigned by Congress as part of the appropriations process. This year, Congress adopted a continuing resolution to fund transportation projects which allowed SAFETEA-LU earmarks, but allows no congressional earmarking. As a consequence, over \$438 million is available nationwide in discretionary grants from this program for this year. These grants are available with 80% federal and 20% local and/or state match requirements.

**DISCUSSION:** Since the original site plan was developed for Potomac Yard in 1999, the City has been studying and then designing a transit service which will provide high quality transit service to the Yard. In addition to some smaller studies, a major Alternatives Analysis study, an Implementation Study, and An Environmental Study have all been completed. The conclusion of all of these studies is that a transitway, to be used by buses initially, would provide the best transit service in a corridor generally parallel to Route 1, between the Braddock Road Metro Station and the Pentagon. In Alexandria, we expect that buses will operate every five minutes, and each station along the transitway will have a variety of amenities, such as real time passenger information, shelters, seating and lighting. Portions of the transitway will have dedicated rights-of-way and other portions will be in mixed traffic. Staff, together with the community, has developed a basic service design for the facility which will be considered by City Council this spring. An FY 2007 CMAQ grant of \$1.0 million with no local match required has been acquired for design, and the project has been submitted for inclusion in the regional Constrained Long Range Plan.

Since the total project cost cannot be determined until later in the design phase, it was determined that a \$5 million grant would be requested from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) from this funding source to enable it to be constructed with minimal uncertainty. These funds are targeted to construct the stations, amenities, and dedicated portions of the transitway in addition to other Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds, SAFETEA-LU funds, state funds, and local funds which can be applied to this project. Construction should be able to commence after the final design is completed next year, with service to commence by 2011.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Section 5309 grants require 20 percent local and/or state matching funding. If approved, this application will require \$1 million of local and/or state matching funds, most likely during the FY 2008 budget period. Potential sources of matching funds include revenues from (1) increased vehicle registration fees (\$900,00) as tentatively approved for the FY 2008 budget by Council (2) the revenues from a potential transit special tax district which is the development stage (to be considered by the community, property owners and Council later in 2007); or (3) potential additional transportation funding from the results of the recent General Assembly actions.

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Richard J. Baier, Director, T&ES

Bruce Johnson, Director, OMB

Thomas H. Culpepper, Deputy Director, T&ES

James Maslanka, Division Chief, Office of Transit Services and Programs