

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 5, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2008 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CMAQ) AND REGIONAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (RSTP) PROJECTS

ISSUE: Consideration of the FY 2008 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 2008; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to apply for these grants, and enter into agreements to accept those federal grants that may be managed by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

DISCUSSION: Every year the Commonwealth of Virginia allocates Federal CMAQ and RSTP money to our region, which the jurisdictions within the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) distribute among themselves. Regionally, these funds typically total approximately \$28 million of CMAQ funds and \$36 million of RSTP funds. Alexandria has been the recipient of increasing amounts of CMAQ and RSTP funds, as shown in the following table.

<u>Fiscal Year (FY)</u>	<u>Alexandria Funding</u>
FY 2005	\$ 800,000
FY 2006	\$1,690,000
FY 2007	\$3,585,000

CMAQ funds are allocated to regions in the country which are either not meeting Clean Air Act regulations, like the Washington metropolitan area, or are nominally meeting the law, but are in a maintenance status, like the Richmond metropolitan area. 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. Prior to FY 2006, these funds required a 20% local match, with the exception of traffic improvements, which were 100% funded by the federal government. The Commonwealth now provides all required local match.

RSTP funds are very 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, which are regional in nature, rather than local improvements. These funds are also provided with no local match, with the federal government contributing 80% of the project funding and the Commonwealth contributing the 20% match.

At the end of September 2006, the City of Alexandria will be asked to provide the Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Authority (NVTA) a set of candidate projects to be funded by the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP).

Seven projects are proposed for submittal to NVTA for CMAQ or RSTP funding in FY 2008. These projects are briefly described below.

1. Potomac Yard Transitway

The City is a full participant in a study to perform the environmental analyses required to obtain a categorical exclusion under federal environmental regulations. The City has also been a full participant in developing a transit operations plan for Potomac Yard with the Commonwealth of Virginia and with Arlington County. The City plans to make substantial transit improvements in Potomac Yard to make it a more transit-oriented development. Through the combined efforts of the citizens, Council and staff, a preliminary design for improved transit in Potomac Yard has been developed which includes a dedicated transitway from the Monroe Avenue Bridge to East Glebe Street. Using previously allocated RSTP and CMAQ funds, the City will develop the final design of the facility in cooperation with adjoining developers in FY 2007. In FY 2008, the City plans to commence the process of building the required infrastructure, including the transitway, traffic signal work, and stations. This grant will help fund construction of these facilities.

Through the efforts of various studies, it appears that a transitway serving Potomac Yard and all ancillary expenditures will cost between \$18.1 million and \$32.7 million. The City is in the process of seeking funding to accomplish this work. In the recently passed SAFETEA-LU federal transportation act reauthorization, the City was allocated approximately \$1,000,000 to specifically fund this project. Additional SAFETEA-LU or earmarked federal funds may also be available in

the future for this project. In FY 2007, Alexandria received \$1,785,000 of CMAQ funds for this project. Funding of \$2.0 million of FY 2008 CMAQ or RSTP funds is requested to accomplish the construction of some of the transit improvements in Potomac Yard. Staff recommends that this project receive the highest ranking for FY 2008.

2. Alexandria Transit Store

The Alexandria transit store is a facility operated by the City of Alexandria through an agreement with the Alexandria Transit Company since July 2004, to provide fare media from several transit properties, transit information, and information about a full range of travel options including ridesharing, teleworking, and car sharing. The funds to open and operate this facility have been provided by previous RSTP allocations. The City forecasts that money from prior grants will be exhausted in FY 2008 or FY 2009.

Funding of \$300,000 of RSTP or CMAQ funds will be requested for this project. Staff recommends that this project receive the second highest priority ranking for FY-08

3. Alternative Transportation Promotion

The City of Alexandria's Rideshare program has been in existence for more than 20 years and is charged with the primary task of reducing the number of single-occupant vehicles traveling to, from, and through the City to decrease traffic congestion and improve air quality.

In an effort to further reduce single-occupant vehicle trips in the City, a number of new programs and outreach efforts will be developed and carried forward. The main audiences for such efforts will be City residents, businesses, and visitors.

Marketing and outreach will take place through literature, display, and website development; local media exposure in newspapers and on cable channels; transportation fairs and presentations; and special promotions and contests.

Regarding the aforementioned, the City's outreach efforts will be developed in part based on research being currently conducted to determine what outreach methods to be most effective. A combination of social marketing and individualized marketing techniques will be developed to achieve the final goal of having more people use transit, rideshare, bicycling, and walking as opposed to driving alone.

In FY 2007, we received \$250,000 to begin to implement a set of ridesharing enhancements. Funding of \$400,000 is requested in FY 2008 to expand these efforts and to accomplish the new tasks set forth in this project. Staff recommends that this project receive the third highest ranking for FY 2008.

4. Pedestrian Improvements to Major Roadways

Major arterials including Route One (US 1), Beauregard Street, and Seminary Road provide crucial vehicular connections through the City for regional commuters and City residents. However, these high-traffic, high-speed thoroughfares also present major impediments to pedestrian traffic – particularly for walking trips that provide transportation to activity centers and employment centers. These corridors are among the least safe areas of the City as identified in a review of pedestrian-vehicle accidents since 2004. To make these roads more pedestrian friendly, the City of Alexandria proposes a series of pedestrian safety measures including roadway lighting improvements, mid-block crosswalks with pedestrian refuges and pedestrian signals. This project is consistent with Alexandria’s Community Pathways effort to enhance the pedestrian safety in Alexandria.

Funding of \$120,000 is requested to accomplish the construction of the most necessary improvements identified in this study. Staff recommends that this project receive the fourth highest ranking in FY 2008.

5. Bicycle Safety Improvements at Intersections and Multi-Use Trail Connections

The City of Alexandria is seeking to improve transportation options for bicycle commuters who work in the City and/or those who pass through en route to employment centers in Arlington County, Fairfax County or the District of Columbia. Using GIS data and forecasts of commuting patterns through 2030, the City of Alexandria has identified key connections that: (a) provide key bicycle/pedestrian access to neighboring jurisdictions, (b) intersections that currently present obstacles to safe bicycle travel and/or have statistically significant crash rates and (c) intersections that are expected to see increase usage over time. The City of Alexandria will prioritize three to five intersections for innovative bicycle safety improvement pilot projects such as striping, signalization and signing. This project is consistent with the Alexandria’s Spin City 2009 initiative, an effort to earn bicycle-friendly community status for the city.

Funding of \$180,000 is requested to accomplish the various activities, which will be the focus of this grant. Staff recommends that this project receive the fifth highest ranking in FY2008.

6. Holmes Run Pedestrian/Bicycle Tunnel Construction

The three-mile Holmes Run greenway is one of the most heavily used alternative transportation corridors in the City of Alexandria. The linear park provides a key off-road bicycle and pedestrian connection from the booming high density residential and retail centers on the West End to the Eisenhower Valley. It is the spine for key bicycle and pedestrian connections to Fairfax County and Old Town Alexandria.

The trail provides access under Interstate 395 and Van Dorn Street via two tunnels. These tunnels were originally service tunnels and have only recently been adapted for use by bicyclists

and pedestrians. However, the tunnels are in a serious state of disrepair. During periods of heavy rains, the tunnels flood – ruining the lighting and depositing sediment and debris onto the fair weather crossing of Holmes Run. This was exemplified by the damage inflicted by the recent flooding of portions of Holmes Run. Seepage from adjoining concrete embankments creates water hazards; the tunnels are also extremely compact – presenting both real and perceived safety hazards for users. Vandalism is common.

In 2006, the City of Alexandria began work on a \$250,000 RSTP grant to perform an engineering study of the tunnels to investigate ways to address ongoing maintenance, security and make general safety improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians. A FY 2008 grant would be a follow up to the engineering grant and allow the City to make some of physical improvements to this key regional connection.

This grant will increase existing funding to \$700,000 for the construction of improvements to the tunnels and approaches through which the Holmes Run Bike Trail passes under I-395. Staff recommends this project as its sixth highest priority.

7. King Street Metro Station Parking Lot and Bus Lane Reconfiguration

The King Street Metro station is a very important element of the regional public transportation system. It has become even more important after the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) relocated its headquarters to a site approximately 1,600 feet from the King Street Metro station.

Metro and Alexandria have completed or begun construction of several projects to improve the station itself and the access into the station; however, Metrorail activity is not the only transit activity, which is increasing at the station. Bus service operated by both WMATA and DASH is increasing to serve the East Eisenhower area containing the PTO complex. The current arrangement of the King Street parking lot and bus lane is inadequate to serve any additional bus service. A Fiscal Year 2006 project examined constraints and opportunities which will result in several service design concepts, for the parking lot and bus lane at the King Street Metrorail station to provide better access for pedestrians, buses, and other uses of the facility. In fiscal year 2007, \$250,000 was allocated for the construction of improvements at the lot.

For FY 2008, it is recommended that the City request an additional \$750,000 to construct improvements at this facility. Staff recommends this project as its seventh highest priority.

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

Project	Prior Grant Funding	FY 2008 Grant Funding Request			
		Federal Funds	State Match	Total	Cumulative Total
1. Potomac Yard Transitway	\$1,785,000	\$1,600,000	\$400,000	\$2,000,000	\$3,785,000
2. Alexandria Transit Store	820,000	240,000	60,000	300,000	1,120,000
3. Alternative Transportation Promotion	250,000	320,000	80,000	400,000	650,000
4. Pedestrian Improvements to Major Roadways	0	96,000	24,000	120,000	120,000
5. Bicycle Safety Improvements to Intersections	0	144,000	36,000	180,000	180,000
6. I-395-Holmes Run Pedestrian/ Bicycle Tunnel Construction	250,000	560,000	140,000	700,000	950,000
7. King Street Metro Parking Lot and Bus Lane Reconfiguration	250,000	600,000	150,000	750,000	1,000,000
Total	\$3,355,000	\$3,560,000	\$890,000	\$4,450,000	\$7,805,000

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