

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 7, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER *RM*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO PROCEED WITH THE SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

ISSUE: City Council approval of a resolution to proceed with streetscape improvements along South Washington Street, between Church Street and Gibbon Street federal government funded by the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 1) approving the major design features for the streetscape improvements along South Washington Street, between Church Street and Gibbon Street as presented at the January 25, 2012, public meeting held by staff.

DISCUSSION: The South Washington Street Streetscape Project is a \$2.2 million federally-funded project included as an element of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement between the City and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Settlement Agreement included funding for streetscape improvements in the South Washington Street corridor extending from the Urban Deck northward to Gibbon Street. The project objective is to upgrade South Washington Street in a manner that is consistent with the design of the Urban Deck, which was constructed by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as part of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project. This project is the final element of the Settlement Agreement, which also included the planned Freedmen’s Cemetery Memorial, and the Witter Recreational Fields project which is under construction.

Design of the project has been coordinated between the City departments of Transportation & Environmental Services, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, and Planning & Zoning, as well as VDOT, FHWA, and the National Park Service. The major elements of the project consist of the installation of brick sidewalks, replacing the existing street lights with the decorative street lights consistent with those currently installed on the Urban Deck, upgrading street trees, pedestrian safety improvements, installation of a bike share station, and minor drainage improvements.

Staff has held numerous meetings with the community to facilitate community involvement and to obtain the community's input and project considerations. Staff attended meetings of the Old Town Civic Association, the Board of Architectural Review, and the Parks and Recreation Commission to provide an informational overview of the project and answer any project related questions. On January 25, 2012, staff held a public meeting to present the project, receive any comments or input, and answer questions from the community. This meeting followed the prescribed format of a VDOT Location and Design Public Hearing, meeting the requirements necessary to move forward with the project and maintain the eligibility for federal funding. At this public meeting, 30% design plans were displayed, in addition to various exhibits and renderings of the proposed streetscape improvements. A draft environmental document for the project was also available for review and comment during the meeting. Formal comments were received at the public meeting via written comment forms and a court reporter who was present at the meeting. A summary of the comments received and responses from staff are provided in Attachment 2.

The primary concern raised by members of the community related to impacts on parking in the neighborhood. The residents expressed concern about the limited availability of on-street parking in the vicinity of the project during construction, particularly in the evenings. Staff is sensitive to this concern and explained that any construction related impacts to parking will be limited to South Washington Street during the day and parking will be restored in the evenings to the extent possible. Staff will continue to communicate with the neighborhood as the construction schedule and sequence is developed by the contractor.

Concerns were also raised about the Capital Bikeshare station. Some residents expressed concern that users of the bike stations would park in the neighborhood in order to use the bikes. Some were also concerned about the appropriateness of the proposed location. The location of the Capital Bikeshare Station is near the intersection of South Washington Street and Jefferson Street, in front of the Healthy Back Store. This location was selected to optimize the maximum usage of the facility and minimize impacts to the community. Staff's research into other communities currently using the bike share stations has found no evidence of bike share users parking in neighborhoods to use the facilities. The bikes are primarily used for travelling to and from Metro stations.

Upon receipt of the attached resolution, VDOT will review and approve the project design and authorize the City to move forward with construction. This project is scheduled to begin construction in the summer of 2012, with construction duration of approximately six months.

FISCAL IMPACT: This project is fully federal government funded by \$2.2 million from the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Settlement Agreement.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1. Resolution

Attachment 2. Summary of Questions and Responses from the January 25, 2012, Public Meeting

STAFF:

Bruce Johnson, Chief of Staff

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Richard J. Baier, P.E., LEED AP, Director, Transportation & Environmental Services

Emily A. Baker, P.E., City Engineer, Transportation & Environmental Services

Lisa Jaatinen, P.E., Civil Engineer IV, Transportation & Environmental Services

RESOLUTION NO.

LOCATION AND DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL: SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS, BETWEEN CHURCH STREET AND GIBBON STREET

WHEREAS, after due and proper notice, a public hearing was conducted on January 25, 2012, in the City of Alexandria at City Hall, for the purpose of considering the proposed design of streetscape improvements on South Washington Street, between Church Street and Gibbon Street, VDOT Project Number U000-100-616, in the City of Alexandria, at which Public Hearing drawings, NEPA documents and other pertinent information were made available for public inspection in accordance with state and federal requirement; and

WHEREAS, all persons and parties in attendance were afforded full opportunity to participate in the Public Hearing; and

WHEREAS, representatives of the City of Alexandria were present and participated in said Public Hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Council had previously requested the Virginia Department of Transportation to program the Project; and

WHEREAS, the project provides improvements to pedestrian safety, urban forestry, street aesthetics and encourages non-vehicular transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Council has considered all such matters;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia hereby approves the major design features of the proposed project as presented at the Public Hearing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Alexandria hereby requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to provide all necessary resources to expedite the Project.

ADOPTED: _____
Date

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CITY CLERK

**South Washington Street Streetscape Project
January 25, 2012 Public Meeting
Summary of Questions and Staff Responses**

1. **Question:** Can any of the funding for this project be used to put some evergreen material on the urban deck so that it doesn't look so sad on the off season?

Response: The Settlement Agreement limits the expenditure of funds for this project to the area north of the Urban Deck to Gibbon Street. Staff had previously requested of FHWA to use some of the funding to construct enhancements to the Urban Deck, but FHWA has insisted on sticking to the limits outlined in the Agreement.

2. **Question:** What types of street trees will be provided?

Response: Staff is working with the National Park Service (NPS) to finalize the selection of street trees. The NPS has an easement on the George Washington Memorial Parkway and Washington Street based on a design plan from 1931. Staff and the NPS are evaluating species identified in the 1931 landscape plan for compatibility with current horticultural practices in the region.

3. **Question:** Can these Settlement Agreement funds be used for other improvements in the area?

Response: The Settlement Agreement funds for this project are limited to streetscape improvements in this corridor of South Washington Street, between the Urban Deck and Gibbon Street.

4. **Question:** How will the project coordinate with the neighbors regarding parking? The neighborhood streets are full of residents' parked cars in the evenings.

Response: Staff does not intend to have any construction ongoing in the evening or nighttime hours. Parking impacts will be limited to S. Washington Street, during construction work hours. During peak traffic periods, all lanes on S. Washington Street will be open to traffic. Staff will provide regular notice to the neighbors regarding the construction schedule and any potential impacts to the community.

5. **Question:** Can construction of this project be coordinated with the construction work that's going to be starting soon at Freedmen's Cemetery?

Response: The Freedmen's Cemetery project and the Washington Street Streetscape project are two separate contracts in the same area whose construction will overlap. The Freedman's project construction will begin in Spring 2012, while the Washington Streetscape project construction will begin in Summer 2012. Construction of both projects will be coordinated along with any other work being done in the vicinity. The coordination will ensure that the construction will not cause greater inconvenience to the traveling public or area residents.

6. **Question:** Is it correct that the majority of the work takes place between the back of the curb and the face of the buildings?

Response: All of the work will take place within existing City right-of-way. The majority of the work will be behind the curb, but some work will require replacement of existing curb, installation of upgraded ADA ramps and installation of new drainage structures along the curb.

7. **Question:** When you talk about tree lines, are you talking about the green strip between the sidewalk and the street?

Response: Yes, the grass strip between the back of curb and edge of sidewalk is the proposed location of the tree line.

8. **Question:** What is the City Standard for the tree line?

Response: The minimum City Standard dimension for the grass strip between the back of curb and edge of sidewalk is approximately 40 inches.

9. **Question:** Can people still open car doors to get out of their vehicles if plantings are placed in the planting strip?

Response: Yes. Plantings will be set back from the curb sufficiently to accommodate door swings from parked cars.

10. **Question:** - On the east side of the 900 block of South Washington Street, the grade drops off dramatically. Do the sidewalk improvements and trees mean that the grade will be adjusted?

Response: Yes, the proposed sidewalk improvements will require that this area is raised up to create a level sidewalk and the trees will be slightly lower than the sidewalk.

11. **Question:** Is the sidewalk adjacent to St. Mary's cemetery going to be widened? Will it be narrowed? What is the surface of the sidewalk in this area?

Response: No, the sidewalk adjacent to the St. Mary's cemetery is not included in the scope of this project, in order to avoid any potential damage to graves that may be located in this area. The surface is concrete on the north end and becomes brick as it approaches the Urban Deck.

12. **Question:** Will all of the construction take place during the daytime? Will travel lanes be closed during peak periods?

Response: All construction is anticipated to take place during the daytime. No travel lanes will be closed during peak periods. Some disruption to parking lanes will occur during the day. There is the potential for temporary lane closures during non-peak periods. Staff will communicate with the community in advance, once a contractor has been hired and a detailed construction schedule and sequence has been provided.

13. **Question:** Please explain the bike share station. What is the location for this station?

Response: The proposed bicycle station corresponds to the City's pedestrian/bike plan that was developed several years ago. The stations are placed to correspond to locations within the City that have the most bicycle activity, population, and the level of bicycle friendliness in the City. Bike share is often referred to as bike transit with stations that are solar powered. The stations allow users to pick up and drop off bicycles. Most of the trips taken on Bike share are shorter trips, usually around 20 minutes or less and people tend to use it as the last mile for a

commute. The location of the station in this project is at S. Washington Street and Jefferson Street, in front of the Healthy Back Store. The location was selected based on safe sight distances and proximity to retail.

14. **Question:** Does the community have input on the location of the bike station? Does the location of a bike share station have an impact on parking in the neighborhood?

Response: There has been an ongoing study to propose the ideal locations for the Capital Bikeshare stations in Alexandria. The study takes into consideration a number of factors including the visibility of the station, location of available right-of-way, proximity to desired destinations. Input from the community is also taken into consideration. The installation of this station will not impact any existing parking spaces. There hasn't been any documented history from the use of Capital Bikeshare in Arlington or DC of users driving to a particular station and leaving their car to pick up a bike. Bike share riders are primarily using the Capital Bikeshare bikes to get to and from the closest Metro station.

17. **Question:** Will there be a bike station at the Safeway?

Response: Staff is currently in the planning phase for locating a Capital Bikeshare station possibly at the Safeway. This location is outside the geographic limits defined in the Settlement Agreement will not be included within the South Washington Street Streetscape project scope.

RESOLUTION NO. 2493

**LOCATION AND DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING APPROVAL:
SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS,
BETWEEN CHURCH STREET AND GIBBON STREET**

WHEREAS, after due and proper notice, a public hearing was conducted on January 25, 2012, in the City of Alexandria at City Hall, for the purpose of considering the proposed design of streetscape improvements on South Washington Street, between Church Street and Gibbon Street, VDOT Project Number U000-100-616, in the City of Alexandria, at which Public Hearing drawings, NEPA documents and other pertinent information were made available for public inspection in accordance with state and federal requirement; and

WHEREAS, all persons and parties in attendance were afforded full opportunity to participate in the Public Hearing; and

WHEREAS, representatives of the City of Alexandria were present and participated in said Public Hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Council had previously requested the Virginia Department of Transportation to program the Project; and

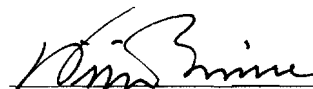
WHEREAS, the project provides improvements to pedestrian safety, urban forestry, street aesthetics and encourages non-vehicular transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Council has considered all such matters;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia hereby approves the major design features of the proposed project as presented at the Public Hearing; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Alexandria hereby requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to provide all necessary resources to expedite the Project.

Adopted: March 13, 2012



WILLIAM D. EULLE MAYOR

ATTEST:



Jacqueline M. Henderson, MMC City Clerk