


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION WITH CONGRESSMAN JAMES P. MORAN

On Friday, March 4, 2005, at 8:15 a.m., Council will hold its annual work session with Congressman James P. Moran to discuss federal issues of concern to the City. The discussion will focus on two related areas: reductions proposed in the President's budget for programs important to the City, and specific purposes for which the City would appreciate federal funding.

Staff is compiling a list of the programs that would likely be affected by the President's proposal. This list is not yet ready, but will be distributed at the work session.

The following is a description of the specific purposes for which the City would appreciate federal funding. Staff hopes that by recommending a project list larger than that which will ultimately be funded, the Congressman and his staff will be able to select from among the projects those most likely to be approved.

1. Funding for First Responders

Mobile Computers for First-Line Responders. Federal earmarks have allowed the Police Department to purchase a sufficient number of mobile computers (laptops) so that each officer can be assigned one. Although the cost will not be as great, the City would also like to purchase additional mobile computers for the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office. It will cost approximately \$300,000 to complete the outfitting of the Fire Department fleet (20 additional laptops, together with the necessary hardware, software, and accessories), and to provide 9 laptops for the Sheriff's office. These laptops will allow the Fire Department to respond to homeland security and other emergencies; they will also provide the Sheriff with the ability to assist the Police Department in such incidents. The City requests federal funding for these computers.

2. Helping Alexandria's Children

Alexandria Child Advocacy Center. Children's Advocacy Centers are child-focused, community-based programs that provide a safe place for children and families who are victims of child abuse and neglect. Alexandria City staff investigate about 70 reports of abuse and neglect

each month. The City believes that it could better serve abused and neglected children and their families if it develops an Alexandria Child Advocacy Center, and is making plans to do so.

The core component of an Advocacy Center is a multi-disciplinary approach to these investigations, and to the prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect. A committee, (comprised of representatives of the City Attorney's and Commonwealth's Attorney's Offices, the Department of Human Services, Stop Child Abuse Now [SCAN], Court Appointed Special Advocates [CASA], Alexandria Mental Health, the Office on Women, the Victim-Witness Assistance Program, and the National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse) has been meeting regularly since January 2003 to plan a City Center.

Alexandria's Child Advocacy Center will need a child-friendly, audio-visually-equipped interview room where a child will feel comfortable talking about what has happened to him; a family visitation room with video conferencing capability, where families can receive support and counseling; medical examination facilities, where a child can feel less scared when medical procedures must be done; meeting rooms for team members; and offices where Center staff can work together to best help a child and his family.

The cost of purchasing, modifying, and equipping a building (possibly a family home) to serve as a Center in Alexandria is estimated at a minimum of \$750,000. The City would appreciate federal funding to help with this project.

3. Projects to Make the City More Transit and Pedestrian-Friendly, and Related Transportation Projects

A. Bus Shelters. Alexandria provides a vital transportation link through its DASH bus system for travelers coming into and through the City. More people will use the DASH system, thereby reducing the system's government subsidy and improving air quality, if transit ridership is made more attractive. One of the ways to do this is by providing shelters to protect people from bad weather while they are waiting for the bus. The City does not have sufficient funds to provide all the new bus shelters that are needed or to replace existing ones. The City requests \$500,000 in federal funds to provide for approximately 50 City-owned bus shelters (some new, some as replacements to existing shelters) to accommodate users of this alternative transportation mode.

B. Fiber Optic Cable for Traffic Signal Coordination. The City of Alexandria is implementing a fiber optic installation project (largely funded with federal Intelligent Transportation System [ITS] funds secured with Congressman Moran's help) along Duke Street from Beauregard Street to Old Town. Fiber optic communication lines allow for coordination of signals among the region's jurisdictions to move traffic more smoothly and thereby improve air quality in this severe non-attainment area. Installing fiber optics on Route 1 through the City will allow us to optimize signal timing on another major interjurisdictional highway, resulting in improved traffic flow and air quality. The City of Alexandria is requesting \$2 million in ITS funds to install conduit and cable within this corridor.

C. Transit study. Alexandria is one of the fifteen most densely populated cities in the United States and is situated between the District of Columbia and Fairfax County. Although the City has grown in population (to almost 140,000) and experiences cut through traffic which exceeds 65 percent on several arterial roadways within the City, the existing Metro rail stations are often not proximate to the user populations served or which could be served. There are many areas of the City that are under-served by transit. The City requests \$1 million to study and prepare a concept plan for serving these under-served areas. Strategies to be reviewed include but are not limited to bus rapid transit between the existing four Metro stations, dedicated shuttle systems, or both.

D. Real Time Bus Information. Alexandria has an earmark of \$353,249 to develop a real time passenger information system for both WMATA and DASH. This money will be used to develop the basic service design for a real time bus information system. In cooperation with WMATA we will be able to install some information signs at busier destinations. We are requesting new moneys to buy and install the hardware to more widely distribute information to bus users at less well used stops, possibly through innovative technologies.

E. Eisenhower Metro. Alexandria must begin a process of designing a new north entrance for the Eisenhower Metro facility. Funds must be allocated to fund preliminary engineering of this facility. Since several new developments are being built now in Eisenhower East, funds should be allocated to build sidewalks and crosswalks which can better connect them to the existing station.

F. Widen Eisenhower Avenue. Eisenhower Avenue is not currently wide enough to support the traffic flow that is projected as the PTO and other commercial projects are fully built out. If it is not upgraded, traffic problems resulting from it could affect travelers from the region and from other states on the Beltway and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. We would appreciate federal funds to assist in planning for the widening of this road.

G. Relocation and Construction of a new "WMATA Bus Barn." WMATA operates a facility in North Old Town that services a portion of the Metrobus fleet. This outdated and overcrowded facility has been there for many years, but neighborhood residents and many others feel that it should be relocated to an area that is less residential in nature. Noise and bright lights cause disruptions to the neighborhood, often in the middle of the night when buses are being started and operations initiated for early morning bus runs. The City and Congressman Moran have worked to have WMATA relocate this facility. Although sufficient funding has not been secured, WMATA will soon initiate a process to facilitate the relocation. We will discuss this, as well as ways the Congressman can continue to help with this issue, at the work session.

4. Funding for Bicycle and Multi-Use Trails

A. George Washington Parkway trails. A feasibility Study, costing approximately \$450,000, is needed to review the Hunting Towers easement and boardwalk and the Dangerfield

Island trail flooding along the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The Hunting Towers temporary bike path has provided the larger community with a viable alternative bike path during the Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction. The location of the bike path enhances the pedestrian/bicycle experience as it allows for interactive interpretation of the wetland areas and Jones Point Park. A permanent easement and future boardwalk would continue to provide the recreational link from the GW Parkway into the National Park Service property, Jones Point Park, which is on the waterfront. Additionally, the Dangerfield Island/Mt. Vernon Trail access issues relate to constant flooding on the trail. These flooding incidents detract from and diminish the use of the trail. A study could provide design options for the renovation of the trail sections located on National Park Service property.

B. Trail Connections with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Funding (amount undetermined at this time) is needed to improve trail and bikeway connections between the Eisenhower Trail/Bikeway and the proposed Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trails. Such a trail would connect the Eisenhower Trail near the east end of Cameron Run where it flows under the Beltway and follow the north bank for one-half mile to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Approach Connector, which is located at the Southeast edge of the Telegraph Road interchange. The Wilson Bridge Approach Connector will run between the beltway and Hunting Creek to the Mt. Vernon Trail.

C. At-Grade Stream Crossing for the Van Dorn Street–395 Shirley Highway Culvert. A Van Dorn Street at-grade stream crossing under 395 is a vital connection from the west end to Cameron Station and the east end of the city through the Holmes Run Parkway. This corridor is the only access across 395 Shirley Highway. Improvements are necessary to facilitate safe travel from Dora Kelley Nature Center to Cameron Station and Tucker Elementary School, as well as Eisenhower Avenue. The estimated cost of this project is \$750,000.

5. Sewer Improvements to Help Clean Up the Chesapeake Bay

Infiltration & Inflow Funding. Many areas of the City have aging and deteriorating sanitary sewers. Repairing or replacing these sewers is very expensive. In the FY 02 and 03 federal budgets, Congressman Moran was successful in getting Alexandria \$1.575 million in federal appropriations to help pay for the construction of a bypass sewage line from the Four Mile Run Pumping Station to the Potomac Yard Interceptor Line. This bypass will reduce sewage overflows into the Four Mile Run Creek, which is a part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Recent studies undertaken for the City analyzed additional problems with the sanitary sewer system in the northeastern part of the City, where the bypass sewer line is being installed. These studies detected significant infiltration and inflow problems, which allow ground and storm water to enter the sewers during wet weather periods. This results in basement backups and sanitary sewer overflows, which eventually find their way into Four Mile Run Creek and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Correction of these infiltration and inflow problems is expected to cost approximately \$10 million. The City would appreciate additional federal financial assistance for this project.

6. Maintaining and Restoring Our Cultural Resources.

A. Gadsby's Tavern Museum. Gadsby's Tavern Museum consists of two buildings, a tavern and a hotel, both built in the late 18th century. The buildings are named for Englishman John Gadsby who operated them from 1796 to 1808. Mr. Gadsby's establishment was a center of political, business, and social life in early Alexandria. The tavern was the setting for dancing assemblies, theatrical and musical performances, and meetings of local organizations. George Washington enjoyed the hospitality provided by tavern keepers and twice attended the annual Birthright Ball held in his honor. Other prominent patrons included John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the Marquis de Lafayette.

Like any building of its age, Gadsby's is in constant need of repair and improvements. Projects in need of funding currently include replacement of the heating and air conditioning system, and improvements to the rear courtyard area and the historic ice well. In addition, the Museum, which includes a full-service restaurant, needs a new elevator, upgraded restrooms, renovations to the historic ballroom, and improvements to make the facilities more ADA-accessible.

The cost of these improvements is expected to be approximately \$500,000. The City would appreciate a federal grant to help defray this cost through the Save America's Treasures or another federal program.

B. Freedmen's Cemetery. As part of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project, the City is memorializing the Freedmen's Cemetery located adjacent to South Washington Street. While there is some money for this purpose in the Project, there is not sufficient funding to design and install an appropriate memorial for this site. The City needs approximately \$100,000 to assist with this project and would appreciate federal appropriations for this purpose.

7. Federal Funding for Homeland Security. The Washington area bears a disproportionate burden in terms of homeland security costs. Congressman Moran has been supportive of the federal government's paying its fair share of these costs, most recently in seeking funds to cover the homeland security costs related to the presidential inauguration. In the past, he has also successfully had funds earmarked for some of the costs related to the housing of alleged terrorists at the Alexandria Jail. While the City realizes that Congress is reluctant to earmark funds for homeland security needs, we ask that Congressman Moran seek funding for the City for the following purposes if the opportunity arises.

A. Perimeter Security Upgrades for the Public Safety Center. As a result of the events of September 11, two highly-visible terrorist trials were scheduled to take place at the Alexandria Federal Courthouse. The first of these, the trial of John Walker Lindh, is now over. Still being housed at the Public Safety Center is Zacarias Moussaoui. In addition, other individuals are being detained at the Public Safety Center as a result of their alleged ties to terrorist groups.

The City of Alexandria has responded to the dangers that accompany the incarceration of alleged terrorists by significantly improving security at the Alexandria Public Safety Center (PSC), at great cost to the City. Physical improvements include fencing and gates that prevent anyone from entering the PSC property without prior approval by one of the deputy sheriffs stationed at the gates to check visitors; crash walls and other physical barriers designed to stop trucks and other vehicles that could be carrying bombs or other weapons of mass destruction; a new, stand-alone building that will serve as a secure visitors' screening center; more intense outdoor lighting; new audiovisual and other monitoring equipment; and parking lots that have been relocated to accommodate the fencing and other improvements. The total cost for these improvements was \$5.1 million. The City has received only \$2.9 million in federal funds to pay for these costs (\$2 million from the U.S. Marshals Service, and \$0.9 million in Congressional earmarks). The City requests a final Congressional earmark of \$2.2 million to cover the remainder of these costs.

B. Emergency Operations Center. The City of Alexandria's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located at the Fire Department's Training Center on Jefferson Street, in a building that was built and formerly used as a school. The building is not considered secure for EOC purposes. Furthermore, the room used as an EOC was not designed for and is not really suitable for that purpose in today's environment. It is ordinarily used as a training facility for firefighters, and requires several hours to move furniture and set up phone, computer, and facsimile lines when an emergency is declared. This "changeover" time results in precious time being lost.

The City needs to move the EOC and locate it in a hardened, less vulnerable building with suitable perimeter security so that it can adequately respond to today's homeland security threats and other emergencies. Such a facility would also allow the City to equip it with state-of-the-art equipment that would not have to be assembled and the dismantled before and after each emergency.

The City has not done any site-specific planning for a new EOC, but believes (based on the recent experience of Montgomery County, which relocated its EOC) that the cost of relocating Alexandria's facility would be approximately \$6.5 million.

If Congress makes federal funding available to localities for this purpose, the City would appreciate having its EOC needs included.

C. E-911 System Modernization and Replacement. Alexandria's E-911 system, which handles approximately 160,000 calls annually, is now 10 years old—ancient for modern technology. It is increasingly prone to failure, and when it does break down, replacement parts are often difficult to find. The current system does not provide many of the enhanced features of newer systems, and will be unable to handle Voice over Internet (VOIP) calls and other future technologies. The City estimates that it will cost \$1.6 million to replace the current system, and requests federal financial assistance for this project.

D. Public Safety Radio Replacement. Alexandria's public safety officers (police, fire, and sheriff) use a public safety radio system to communicate with each other. The ability of the system to provide reliable communications within the City, as well as with public safety officers in Arlington and other localities, is crucial during homeland security incidents and other emergencies. By replacing existing handheld radios with new models, interoperability with planned new radio systems in other jurisdictions will be enhanced. The cost of totally replacing these radios is estimated at \$3.6 million. The City would appreciate any available federal funds to help defray this cost.

STAFF:

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