

22
01-12-08

Transportation Master Plan

Despite repeated objections of more than 50 historic Parker-Gray residents – all of whom live on N. Patrick and Henry Streets - the Ad Hoc Transportation Task Force still proposes bus rapid transit (BRT) on Route 1 as part of the amendments to the City's Transportation Master Plan.

BRT remains unacceptable to residents in the Parker-Gray neighborhood because:

- In our neighborhood, Patrick and Henry Streets are predominantly residential streets.
- There is no obvious precedent for bus service on Patrick and Henry Streets. Local buses now, and in the past, take the route from Jefferson-Davis Highway to Powhatan Street to N. Washington Street. No buses operate on Route 1 in Parker-Gray.
- Low income, elderly and disabled residents are already within one or two blocks of either Metrorail, or Metrobus or Dash buses (AT5, AT2, AT8, etc.) that use Washington or West Streets as the north-south route.
- At the April 12, 2007 Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan Community Meeting Mr. Hanery confirmed, in response to my question, that metrorail alone can absorb the transportation needs of all new Braddock residents. Given the massive development planned for the Braddock Metro area, slow-moving buses making local stops will further congest Route 1 and disrupt traffic.
- There is no significant passenger gain by setting a BRT route on Patrick and Henry Streets. In a neighborhood of primarily single-family homes and limited (projected) business opportunity, economic development is better served by directing buses down Washington Street where there are numerous churches, restaurants and retail establishments. Washington Street maintains a streetscape more amenable to BRT.
- Given the congestion on Route 1, the City will undoubtedly attempt to remove parking on Patrick Street, possibly Henry Street, and provide a dedicated BRT lane. This will reduce our already-constrained parking supply in Parker-Gray while also removing an important safety buffer for homeowners and pedestrians.
- The sidewalks in front of homes on Patrick and Henry Streets are narrow. Sometimes the front stoop is only three feet to the curb. Proposed bus shelters will not have adequate sidewalk space, thus compromising the sidewalk navigability especially for the handicapped individuals. If the city needs visual confirmation of this problem, I direct staff to the recent installation of a stop light on the south east corner of Patrick Street and Oronoco Street. Any other issues, such as privacy, safety, etc., are secondary to the accessibility problem.
- I remind the city that many of the historic homes are constructed with fragile foundations that are only 23 inches of brick on soil. To protect these foundations from damage (vibrations), heavy trucks may use only center lanes. To remove the center lane restriction again puts residents at structural risk.
- Environmental studies confirm the dangerous health affects of stack emissions especially from trucks. Trucks that do not travel the streets' center lanes (trucks travel with their stacks upright on the road's crown) emit dangerous particles directly at and into Patrick and Henry Street homes. This environmental problem was somewhat corrected in the 1990's; painstakingly so by local citizens and the city's want to now reverse these earlier gains that have negative health consequences, if not public relations.
- BRT is the result of the Base Closing Act, not local demand, and it offers no tangible benefit to Parker-Gray residents. So why does the special tax district apply only to the Braddock Road residents and not city residents as a whole? Alexandrians are here to serve Alexandria, not to support bus beneficiaries who are non-residents or those from other parts of the metropolitan area.