


*City of Alexandria, Virginia*9-11-07

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 30, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF FY 2009 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND
AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CMAQ) AND
REGIONAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (RSTP)
PROJECT FUNDING REQUESTS

ISSUE: Consideration of the FY 2009 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) Project funding requests.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the transportation projects discussed below, and in the priority order listed, as those projects for which the City of Alexandria will request CMAQ and RSTP grant funding for FY 2009; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to apply for these grants, and give him permission to enter into necessary agreements with the state to accept any of these grants that are provided by the Commonwealth.

DISCUSSION: Every year the Commonwealth allocates Federal CMAQ and RSTP money to our region, which the jurisdictions within the NVT A distribute among themselves. These funding allocations typically total approximately \$30 million for CMAQ and \$34 million for RSTP funds. These funds have been allocated since FY 1993 for CMAQ and FY 1994 for RSTP. Alexandria has been the recipient of substantial amounts of CMAQ and RSTP funding in recent years, as is 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	\$3,850,000
FY 2008	\$3,520,000

CMAQ funds are allocated to regions throughout the country that are either not meeting Clean Air Act regulations, like the Washington metropolitan region, or are nominally meeting these regulations, but are in a maintenance status, like Richmond. 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. These funds require a 20% local match, with the exception of traffic improvements, which are 100% funded by the Federal government. This year, as it has done since 2006, the Commonwealth will provide the local matching funds.

RSTP funds are very flexible funds that 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 that are regional in nature, rather than local improvements. These funds are also available 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 2007, the City of Alexandria will be asked to submit to the Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Authority (NVTA) a set of proposed projects to be funded by the CMAQ and RSTP. These projects will be collectively reviewed by jurisdictional staff and a recommended set of will be submitted to the NVTA Board for approval near the end of the calendar year. These recommendations will then be forwarded to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, who must provide the final approval in the next Six-Year Improvement Plan typically ratified in June of the following year. The funds become available for use in the next fiscal year after all applicable planning documents and agreements are drafted for their use.

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

1. Preliminary Engineering of Exclusive Transitway Improvements

The City of Alexandria will adopt a new version of the transportation element of the City's Master Plan in the fall of 2007. One of the key recommendations in the plan is to study and implement exclusive transitways in three key travel corridors in the City. If implemented, transitways will enable transit vehicles on them to travel faster than general purpose roadway lanes, thus making concepts like bus rapid transit more attractive to transit users in the City.

The City reprogrammed \$500,000 of RSTP funds from FY 2006 to do an initial detailed feasibility study of this proposal. This request will provide an additional \$700,000 of planning and preliminary engineering funds to implement some of the previous study's recommendations. Staff recommends that this project receive the highest priority in FY 2009.

2. Continuing Rideshare Enhancement

The City's rideshare/TDM program was established in 1984 and has proven to be effective in reducing drive-alone travel by encouraging the use of public transportation, rideshare, walking, and bicycling. This grant application requests funding for a series of improvements that will increase the effectiveness of this program. One improvement, which cannot be accomplished with existing funding, is the manner in which the office advertises its services and those of other regional agencies engaged in similar activities.

The Office of Transit Services writes, publishes, and distributes rideshare/TKM program information via electronic and non-electronic formats. Information includes education about using transportation alternatives, event advertising, program updates and initiatives, and transportation news and notices. The means by which information is disseminated includes a monthly e-mail to subscribers, maintenance of a program web site, a quarterly newsletter, and flyers. Transit Services will improve how information is disseminated by supplementing the efforts of staff with contractual services to hold more events, such as employee transportation fairs and resident information sessions, and utilizing new marketing techniques to increase participation in programs and use of transportation alternatives. Additionally, a study will be conducted to measure program awareness and effectiveness.

This request is to provide continuing funding funds for ridesharing enhancement activities. Previous funding for these activities includes \$250,000 for Ridesharing Enhancement in FY 2007, \$400,000 for Alternative Transportation Promotion in FY 2008, and \$300,000 for Continuing Rideshare Improvements in FY 2009. Staff recommends that this project be assigned the second highest priority.

3. Design and Build a Bradlee Transit Center

Currently, Bradlee Center, near the intersection of King Street, Braddock Road, and Quaker Lane, is an important origin and destination for both WMATA and DASH transit services. Since King Street north of Quaker Lane is encountering a significant amount of development, it is likely that demand for transit service will increase at this location. The City has been studying the possibility of reconfiguring streets in front of the Bradlee Center and has acquired State Urban System funds to construct the associated road improvements on King Street between Quaker Lane and Dearing Avenue. One possibility for using the right-of-way, which may become available under some concepts, is a transit center. Such a center would include facilities such as an improved and larger passenger waiting area with seating and lighting, bus route information and improved ability for buses to discharge and board passengers. The funding request for this project is \$900,000.

This project was allocated \$500,000 of RSTP funds in FY 2007 for preliminary engineering of this facility. These funds were reprogrammed to study the feasibility of exclusive transitways in the City. No prior year funding is allocated to constructing a transit center at the Bradlee Center. Staff recommends that this project receive the third highest priority.

4. Analysis of Transit Surveys

Between FY 2006 to FY 2008, several transit user surveys were or are being performed to gauge the performance of transit services in Alexandria. DASH performed a major study of boarding and alighting in FY 2006. In FY 2008, WMATA will conduct a survey of Metrobus users. Also in FY 2008, the City plans to gather boarding and alighting data for Metrobuses serving Alexandria and to do a transit user survey on DASH similar to the one done on Metrobus using RSTP funds previously allocated for a Community Transit Analysis. In FY 2009, the City proposes to conduct a survey of non-transit users to determine how these people might be shifted to transit from single-occupant vehicles. Also in FY 2009 the City will analyze all of these sources of data to identify the most advantageous strategies for Alexandria's future investments in bus transit.

Community Transit Analysis, allocated \$250,000 in FY 2005, will fund much of the data collection to be analyzed in this study. This request, for \$280,000, will fund additional data collection and analyses. Staff recommends that this project receive the fourth highest priority.

5. Holmes Run Pedestrian/Bicycle Tunnel Construction, Phase II

The three-mile Holmes Run greenway is one of the most heavily used non-roadway transportation corridors in the City of Alexandria. This linear park provides a key off-road bicycle and pedestrian connection from the high density residential and retail centers on the West End to the Eisenhower Valley and is a major connector to bicycle and pedestrian facilities in 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. Seepage from adjoining concrete embankments creates water hazards. The tunnels are extremely small, presenting both real and perceived safety hazards for users and vandalism is common.

In 2007, 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. Originally \$260,000 was allocated in a FY 2008 grant for this project. This allocation was subsequently withdrawn to balance the actual amount of money allocated for Northern Virginia. The City has been notified that these withdrawn funds will be restored in FY 2008 after this allocation is approved by the NVTA. This money will provide follow up funding to the engineering (RSTP) grant and allow the City to make physical improvements to these key regional connectors. The proposal for \$750,000 of FY 2009 grant funds will supplement the previous grants. Staff recommends that this project receive the fifth highest priority.

6. Safe Routes to Transit

Walking and bicycling are practical, cost effective and sustainable ways to reach regional transit stops. However, many commuters and residents surveyed as part of the City's 2007 "Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan" cited safety or physical barriers as a primary reason for driving alone instead. Alexandria's "Safe Routes to Transit" program will implement projects and programs that facilitate walking or bicycling to regional transit stops or car sharing locations. Improvements in the safety and convenience of bicycling and walking to transit stops will make these important feeder trips easier, faster, and safer and give commuters the opportunity to leave their cars at home.

The "Safe Routes to Transit" program will implement projects identified as high- and medium-priority improvements in the City of Alexandria "Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan" of 2007, and is available on-line at the following web address: <http://www.alexride.org/bikepedstudy.php>. Typical projects would include secure bicycle storage at transit stations, physical safety enhancements adjacent to transit stations, removal of pedestrian and bicycle barriers near transit stations and system-wide transit enhancements to accommodate bicyclists or pedestrians. Projects will be targeted at Metrorail stations, major bus centers and future bus rapid transit corridors. Projects should help reduce congestion on regional roadways.

This project is requesting funding of \$500,000 to advance some initiatives undertaken by the Sidewalk Connection Improvements Near Metro Stations and Bus Stops in FY 2002. Staff recommends that this project be given the sixth priority of funding.

7. Rebuild the King Street Parking Lot and Bus Loading Area

The King Street Metrorail station is an important element of the regional public transportation system and the primary rail to bus transfer hub in Alexandria. 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 Metrorail station.

WMATA and the City have completed and are planning 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 not adequate to serve additional bus service. A FY 2006 grant-funded project is examining constraints and opportunities that 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 FY 2007, a \$250,000 RSTP grant was allocated for the construction of improvements at the lot. In FY 2008, the City was provided with an additional \$260,000 for the construction of improvements at this location.

WMATA is currently performing a study to identify the types and cost of improvements at King Street. This study should be completed by the end of calendar year 2007. The City is

requesting \$1.5 million to cover the remaining cost of constructing this facility in this application for FY 2009. Staff has assigned the seventh highest priority to this project.

SUMMARY:

FY 2009 Grant Funding Request					
Project	Prior Grant Funding	Federal Funds	State Match	Local Match	Total
Preliminary Engineering of Exclusive Transitway Improvements	\$500,000	\$560,000	\$140,000	0	\$700,000
Continuing Rideshare Enhancements	\$650,000	\$240,000	\$60,000	0	\$300,000
Design and Build a Bradlee Transit Center	\$0	\$720,000	\$180,000	0	\$900,000
Analysis of Transit Surveys	\$250,000	\$224,000	\$56,000	0	\$280,000
Holmes Run Pedestrian/Bicycle Tunnel Construction, Phase II	\$510,000	\$600,000	\$150,000	0	\$750,000
Safe Routes to Transit	\$750,000	\$400,000	\$100,000	0	\$500,000
Rebuild the King Street Parking Lot and Bus Loading Area	\$610,000	\$960,000	\$240,000	0	\$1,200,000
TOTALS	\$3,270,000	\$3,704,000	\$926,000	0	\$4,630,000

FISCAL IMPACT: The proposed projects do not require local matching funds from the City. The match will be provided from the Commonwealth. These projects, the requested grant amounts and sources of funds are listed above.

STAFF:

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