


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 16, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTIONS (1) TO INITIATE THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION, AND (2) TO REALLOCATE STATE URBAN FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE

ISSUE: Environmental review process for the Potomac Yard Metrorail station and reallocation of State Urban Funds.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt the two attached resolutions requesting that:

- (1) the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), in coordination with the City of Alexandria, begin the environmental review process for the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail station (Attachment I); and
- (2) the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) establish this environmental review process as a VDOT recognized project and reallocate \$1 million in State Urban Funds for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Environmental Impact Statement Study (Attachment II).

DISCUSSION: City Council established the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group in October of 2008. The mission of the Work Group was to: (a) analyze the financial tools, risks and fiscal impacts of funding the Metrorail station; (b) examine concept refinement and constructability of a new Metrorail station, review construction costs; and (c) evaluate potential ridership. The Work Group met over the last year and reviewed the information presented for their consideration. In their review and analysis of the materials the Work Group developed principles that reflect the work done, and the consensus points reached by the Work Group. The principles that were developed by the Work Group related in part to the development of environmental studies for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

Parallel to the Work Group's efforts was the work of the Potomac Yard Development Advisory Committee (PYDAC). Subsequently, the Planning Commission recommended and City Council adopted on May 15 a North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan, and then on June 12, City Council

adopted a Coordinated Development District #19 which established plans and zoning for North Potomac Yard. Integral to those plans is the construction of a new Metrorail station to serve Potomac Yard. The cost of this Metrorail station is estimated to range (in 2015 dollars) from \$190 million to \$270 million. Because the proposed station's location may impact federal interests given its location near the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Four Mile Run and the Potomac River, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study is necessary. The possibility of receiving some federal funding for the Metrorail station also creates a rationale to undertake an EIS. Because the Metrorail station will be owned and operated by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), the lead agency, to manage the EIS process and the EIS contractor, will be WMATA. The City will closely partner with WMATA in this EIS study process, as it will throughout the station design and construction process.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), under which an EIS is undertaken, was established as a national policy promoting the enhancement of the environment and ensures that environmental factors are weighted equally when compared to other factors in the decision making process undertaken by federal agencies. The NEPA process includes an evaluation of relevant environmental effects of a Federal project through studies such as the proposed EIS.

A number of Federal agencies have been identified as stakeholders in this project, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE). There are potential environmental impacts to parkland and wetlands proximate to the station locations under consideration.

The scope, schedule and budget for this EIS study are currently under development and the cost of the EIS will likely be in excess of \$2 million. Staff is working with WMATA to develop the scope, and consideration is being given to keeping the study focused and timely, and not duplicative of studies already completed. As the scope is finalized, staff will prepare a final EIS study financing plan and will bring that plan to City Council for endorsement in the fall.

In order to help finance the EIS study, the Virginia Department of Transportation staff has indicated that \$1 million in State Urban Funds may be reallocated from the Clermont Avenue project (UPC 52175) to assist in funding a portion of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Environmental Impact Statement study. The FTA has indicated that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required for this project. An EIS is the most comprehensive environmental documentation and describes all of the environmental impacts of the project.

For each EIS project, a lead federal agency is required to be designated. The federal agencies involved have discussed this issue, and believe that FTA is the appropriate lead federal agency. However, in order for FTA to assume that role some federal transportation monies need to be part of the funding plan. The proposal is to reallocate \$1 million in Urban Funds (which contains a mix of State and federal transportation funds) from the Clermont Avenue account held by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to a new VDOT account for the EIS study for the Potomac Yard Metrorail station. A number of years ago the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) reallocated some \$3.4 million of its Urban Funds intended for Alexandria

transportation projects towards the Clermont Avenue project (UPC 52175). Commonly known by VDOT as the “Clermont Connector,” the consideration of this project has a long, controversial history and the City had not requested the CTB allocation for this project. The net effect of the CTB’s action is that these needed City urban transportation funds have been for all intents and purposes locked up and are inaccessible to the City. At this time, VDOT is willing to allow \$1 million of these Clermont funds to be reallocated to the EIS study. In the upcoming year, VDOT has indicated that they are willing to allow further allocations from the Clermont Urban Funds account to use for more pressing City road and transit needs. Replacement of these reallocated funds as required by VDOT will be reprogrammed from future years’ City share of future State Urban Funds. Currently, transportation funding under current State funding policies is so problematic that there are no new Urban Funds available in FY 2010 or beyond. VDOT has indicated that this Clermont account must remain open until a final determination by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is made.

FISCAL IMPACT: The funding sources for the multi-year EIS study are proposed to include the \$1 million in reallocated Urban Funds, Metrorail system capital funds held in the City’s name by WMATA, reallocated developer contributions from PYD, as well as the planned Special Tax District revenues (Tier I – Landbay F, G, H and the multi-family section of Landbay I, which is proposed for 2011 implementation). The VDOT required local match is 2.5% and will be paid with locally raised funds. Once an EIS scope of work and budget are prepared and finalized, a funding plan will be brought forward for Council approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment I: Proposed WMATA Resolution Requesting Study

Attachment II: Proposed VDOT Resolution Reallocating Urban Funds

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Richard J. Baier, P.E., LEED, AP Director, T&ES

Abi Lerner, Deputy Director, T&ES

Sandra Marks, Division Chief, Transportation, T&ES

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City Council established the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group in October 2008;

WHEREAS, the Work Group analyzed, examined and evaluated: (a) the financial tools, risks and fiscal impacts of funding the Metrorail station; (b) concept refinement and constructability of a new Metrorail station, to review construction costs; and (c) potential ridership; and

WHEREAS, guidance recommended by the Work Group was presented to the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group, the Planning Commission and the City Council as it relates to station location, relationship between station construction and proposed development, and funding and financial risk; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, the Planning Commission and the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group has considered all such matters; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission recommended and the City Council approved the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan on May 15, 2010; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission recommended and the City Council approved the North Potomac Yard Coordinated Development District (CDD #19) on June 12, 2010; and

WHEREAS, the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan and the related CDD #19 include a new Potomac Yard Metrorail Station as a key transportation element of the Potomac Yard development plans; and

WHEREAS, the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Statement study process is necessary due to the federal interests impact, as well as to help make this project eligible for possibly receiving future federal funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA
THAT:

The City of Alexandria requests that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority begin the environmental review process for the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

ADOPTED: _____
Date

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CITY CLERK

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Virginia Department of Transportation (the "Department") construction allocation procedures, it is necessary that a request by City Council resolution be made in order that the Department program an urban highway project in the City of Alexandria;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA THAT:

The City Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to establish an urban project for the environmental review process of a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station and reallocate \$1 million from the Clermont Avenue project (UPC 52175) to this project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Alexandria, hereby agrees to pay its share of the total cost for preliminary engineering, right of way and construction of this project in accordance with Section 33.1-44 of the Code of Virginia, and that, if the City of Alexandria subsequently elects to cancel this project, the City of Alexandria hereby agrees to reimburse the Virginia Department of Transportation for the total amount of costs expended by the Department through the date the Department is notified of such cancellation.

ADOPTED: _____
Date

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CITY CLERK

RESOLUTION NO. 2409

WHEREAS, the City Council established the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group in October 2008;

WHEREAS, the Work Group analyzed, examined and evaluated: (a) the financial tools, risks and fiscal impacts of funding the Metrorail station; (b) concept refinement and constructability of a new Metrorail station, to review construction costs; and (c) potential ridership; and

WHEREAS, guidance recommended by the Work Group was presented to the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group, the Planning Commission and the City Council as it relates to station location, relationship between station construction and proposed development, and funding and financial risk; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, the Planning Commission and the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group has considered all such matters; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission recommended and the City Council approved the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan on May 15, 2010; and

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WHEREAS, the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan and the related CDD #19 include a new Potomac Yard Metrorail Station as a key transportation element of the Potomac Yard development plans; and

WHEREAS, the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Statement study process is necessary due to the federal interests impact, as well as to help make this project eligible for possibly receiving future federal funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA THAT:

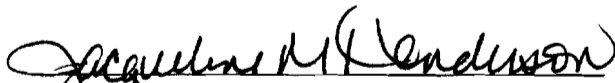
The City of Alexandria requests that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority begin the environmental review process for the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

ADOPTED: June 22, 2010



WILLIAM D. EULLE MAYOR

ATTEST:


Jacqueline M. Henderson, MMC City Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. 2413

WHEREAS, in accordance with Virginia Department of Transportation (the "Department") construction allocation procedures, it is necessary that a request by City Council resolution be made in order that the Department program an urban highway project in the City of Alexandria;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA THAT:

The City Council of the City of Alexandria, Virginia requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to establish an urban project for the environmental review process of a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station and reallocate \$1 million from the Clermont Avenue project (UPC 52175) to this project.

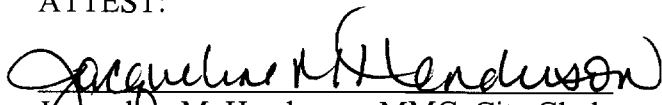
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ADOPTED: June 22, 2010



WILLIAM D. EULLE MAYOR

ATTEST:



Jacqueline M. Henderson, MMC City Clerk