


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 6, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF BUILDING A BUSWAY IN ALEXANDRIA'S PORTION OF THE CRYSTAL CITY-POTOMAC YARD TRANSITWAY AND IMPLEMENTING A BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM IN COORDINATION WITH ARLINGTON COUNTY

ISSUE: Consideration of building and operating a busway along Alexandria's portion of the Crystal City-Potomac Yard transitway.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council formally approve construction of the Route 1 transitway and approve in concept the future operation of a busway in the Crystal City-Potomac Yard corridor.

DISCUSSION: For nine years, the Transportation and Environmental Services Department staff, together with Arlington County and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), has been doing detailed analyses of the need for High Capacity transit along Route 1 and in Potomac Yard, north of the Braddock Road Metro Station. The first major effort was the alternatives analysis of transit options in the corridor. This effort concluded in March 2003 and found that all three of the major high-capacity transit modes were feasible in Potomac Yard. These included a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, a Light Rail line, and a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. Conscious of the real needs of rapidly growing development in Potomac Yard, in 2005, another effort was conducted by Alexandria, Arlington County, and DRPT to determine implementation issues for high capacity transit in Potomac Yard. In 2007, the City, Arlington County, and DRPT developed an environmental document for the entire corridor. Arlington County submitted this document for approval by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), for two segments in the County, and the FTA approved the request. At that time, Alexandria had not made the decision whether or not the transitway should operate in the median or in curb lanes of Route 1.

On June 16, 2007, the City Council agreed that the City would operate the transitway in the median of Route 1. While Council approved the median-based busway, Council has not taken formal action authorizing the construction of the busway. This docket item is intended to serve as a vehicle for that Council approval. The City's Transportation Commission is scheduled to

vote on this formal approval of the busway construction at its April 6 meeting. Information concerning the Commission's vote will be made available to Council shortly thereafter.

Development plans were approved in both Alexandria and Arlington County in the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Corridor over the last year to allow considerably more mixed-use development in both communities. As a consequence, all three modes of high-capacity transit were reanalyzed. Since high-capacity transit was needed as soon as possible, efforts continued to plan to build and operate a busway as the first phase of the high capacity transit service in the corridor. Further, because this corridor may need higher capacity surface public transportation, the Alexandria City Council and Arlington County Board established a project to do an environmental analysis of a possible conversion from an initial busway to a subsequent streetcar service within the corridor. This joint study project should start shortly. A few months ago, Council approved an effort to do an environmental impact statement of a new Metrorail station in Potomac Yard. These issues and plans were reviewed and discussed with staff at the October joint work session of the City Council and Arlington County Board, as it is key to keep the Arlington and Alexandria transit planning and implementation process in sync.

In August 2009, the City worked with staff from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to develop a City Council approved regional TIGER grant application which included funding for the construction of a 0.8 mile portion of the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Busway from East Glebe Road to Monroe Avenue at a cost of \$8.5 million. In February 2010, the City received notification from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and MWCOG which stated the City's 0.8 mile portion of the Potomac Yard Busway was one of several regional projects that will be funded through TIGER. In May 2010, FTA gave final approval to MWCOG to move forward with all regional TIGER funded projects. A final agreement regarding the TIGER grants was signed on December 14, 2010, between MWCOG and the U.S. DOT and between MWCOG and such project owners as Alexandria. The TIGER monies are 100% federal funds, not requiring any local match. This allocation of funds, plus other federal and Commonwealth funds will permit the City to begin the process of building the busway this year.

Federal construction funds can only be used after an appropriate level environmental analysis is completed and accepted by the applicable federal agency. In the case of the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway, the FTA determined that Alexandria and Arlington County could develop that environmental document, known as a categorical exclusion (CE), for the provision of an interim busway. Since the time that the categorical exclusion document was developed, in 2007, several demographic factors have changed in both Alexandria and Arlington County. Both jurisdictions had to update the environmental documents to permit the use of federal funds. Arlington County recently received approval for their categorical exclusion document and Alexandria received its approval from the Federal Transit Administration for its categorical exclusion document on March 25, 2011, which allows the construction of the busway with federal funds.

Upon receipt of the \$8.5 million in Federal TIGER funds, the City will construct a bus facility along the 0.8 mile section of the Potomac Yard Transitway, as is specified in the categorical exclusion document (see Attachment 1 for the transit alignment). Since these are economic

stimulus funds, they are expected to be obligated and expended quickly. An award in September of a design-build contract for the busway is planned, with a late 2011 or early 2012 construction start date.

A bus facility will allow BRT vehicles to operate on the transitway in conjunction with Arlington County busway operations. Currently, staff is reviewing various operating scenarios for the busway, and developing a proposed coordinated busway operations plan with Arlington County. One possible scenario is for WMATA to operate a new limited-stop BRT service on the busway. This operations plan will also determine the role of other transit services on the busway, service frequencies, vehicle type, cost estimates, and an implementation plan. The amenities provided at the stations in the transitway will have the highest quality set of transit features possible. The stations and the transitway will be designed in such a manner that if a decision is made in the future to convert the busway to a streetcar facility, disruptions to customers and adjoining land owners will be minimized.

Depending upon the schedule this firm develops, busway construction work should begin in late 2011 or early 2012. Operation of the busway will be initiated in 2013 or 2014 in coordination with the initiation of service in the Crystal City/Pentagon City/Pentagon area of Arlington County.

FISCAL IMPACT: The busway construction, between East Glebe Road and Monroe Avenue, is fully funded by federal, State, local, and private funds. The design and construction of other sections of the busway will be funded with development contributions. The funding level for busway operations will be based on level of service, and will likely be a FY 2013 or FY 2014 budget decision for Council.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment 1: Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway Interim Alignment

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Richard J. Baier, P.E., LEED AP, Director, T&ES
Abi Lerner, P.E., Deputy Director, T&ES
Jim Maslanka, Division Chief, T&ES

CCPY TRANSITWAY INTERIM ALIGNMENT



Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway Alexandria Portion

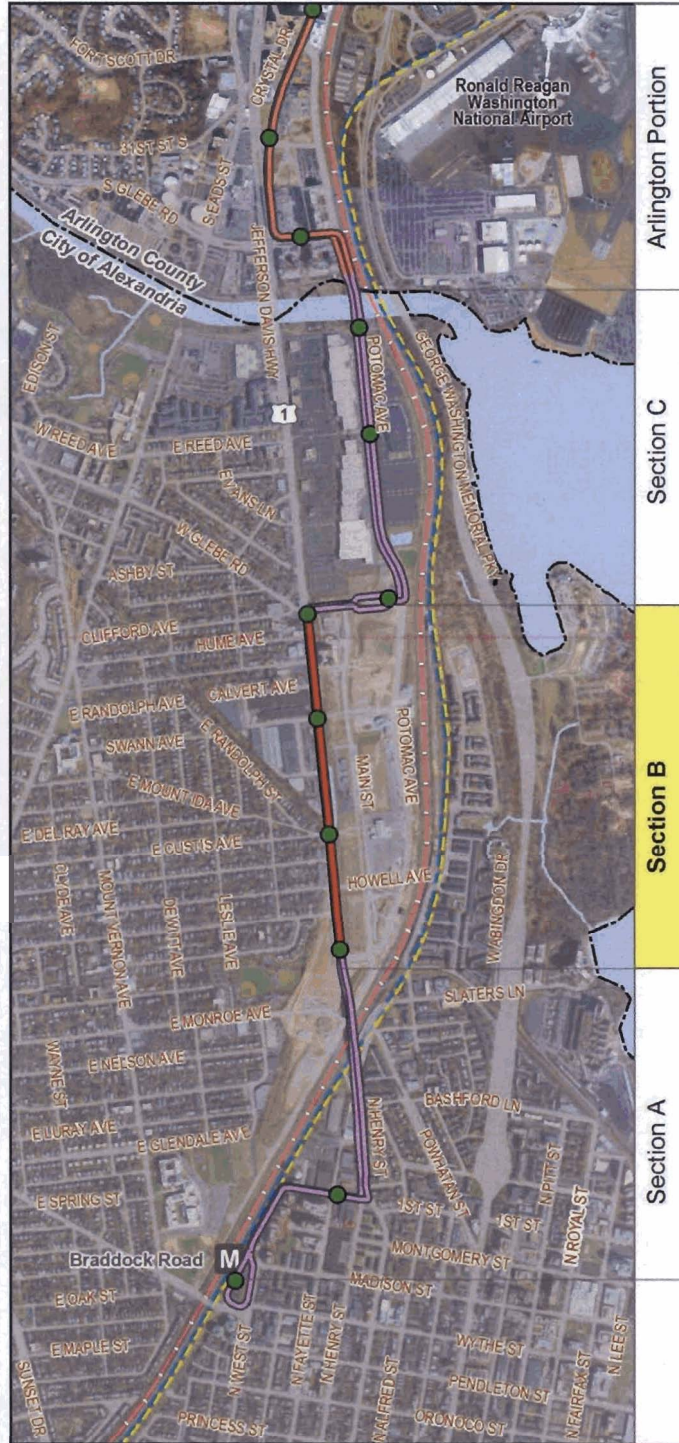
Legend

Proposed Alignment

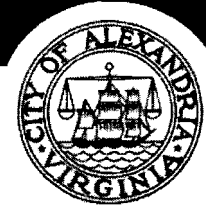
- Dedicated Lanes for Transit - Section B
- Dedicated Lanes for Transit
- Transit Vehicles in Mixed Traffic
- Proposed Station Stop

Other Features

- Metrorail Station
- Metrorail Blue Line
- Metrorail Yellow Line
- CSX Railway
- Section B: Tiger Grant Project



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Busway Operations in Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway

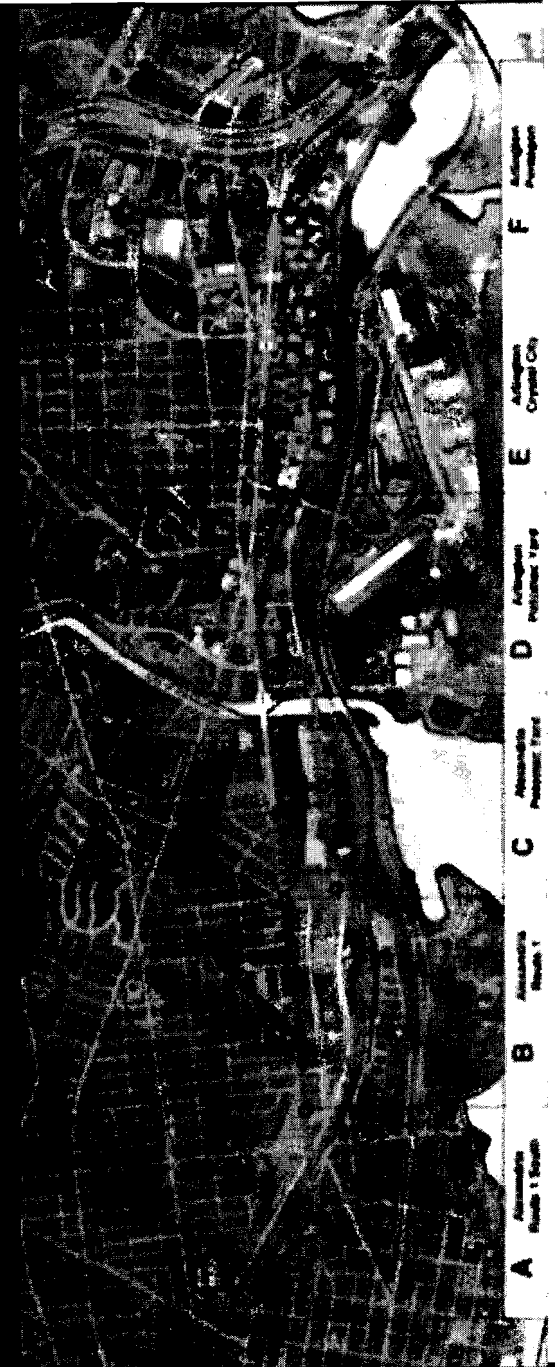
April 12, 2011

Reasons for Project

- A highly urbanized area with major emerging activity centers
- Substantial redevelopment within Potomac Yard
- Heavy traffic congestion within the corridor
- Ability to provide a reliable transit that offers competitive and reduced travel times
- Provide transit service that is consistent with regional transportation plans

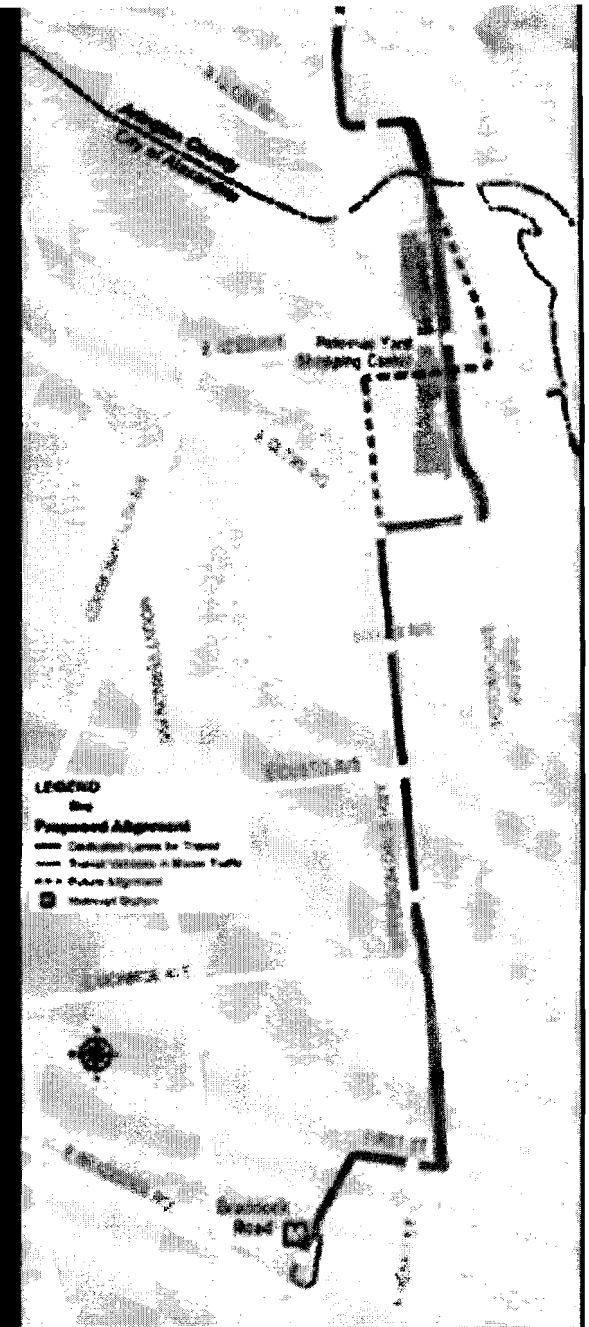
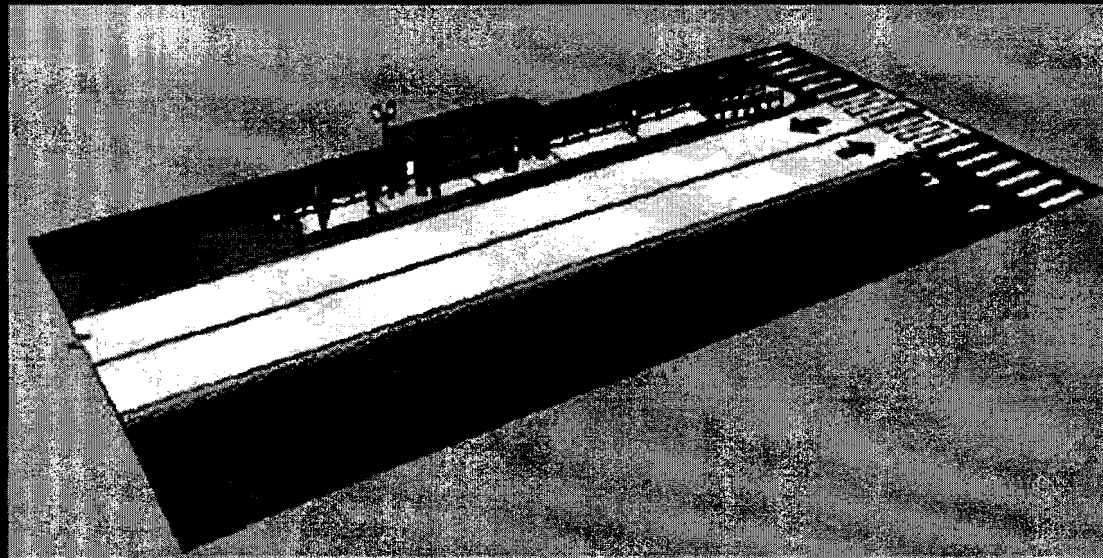
Project History

- 1990s – redevelopment of Potomac Yard begins
- Transit Alternatives Analysis (2003)
- Interim Transit Improvements Implementation Strategy (2005)
- Environmental review (2007, 2010, 2011)
- Crystal City Sector Plan process (2007-2010) resulted in revised alignment
- North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (2010)



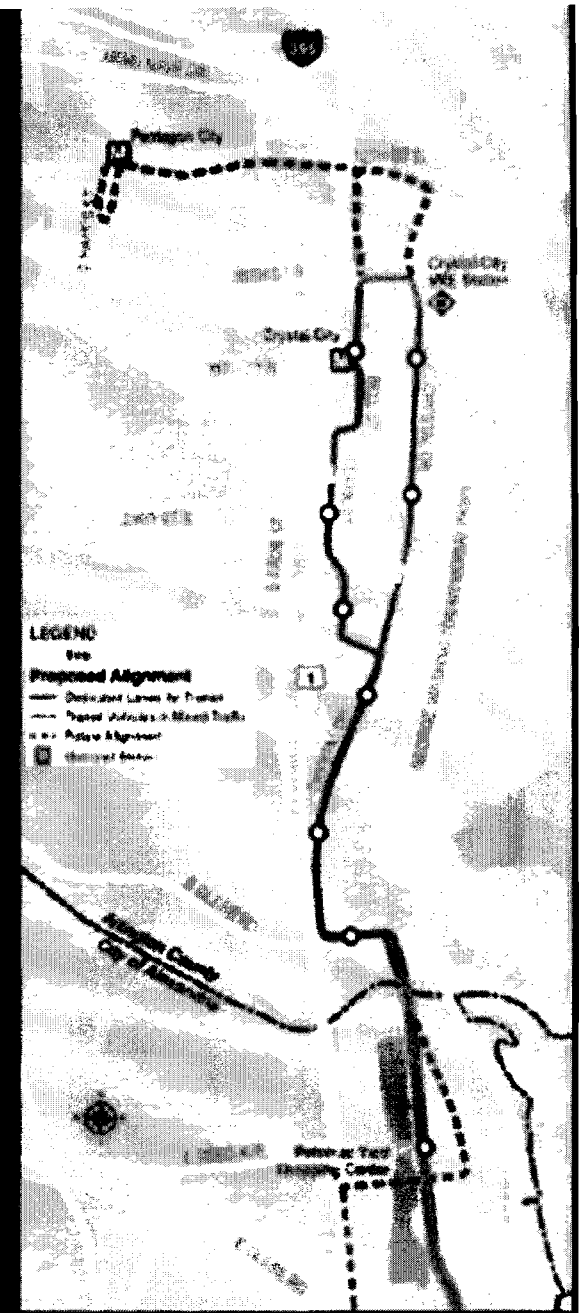
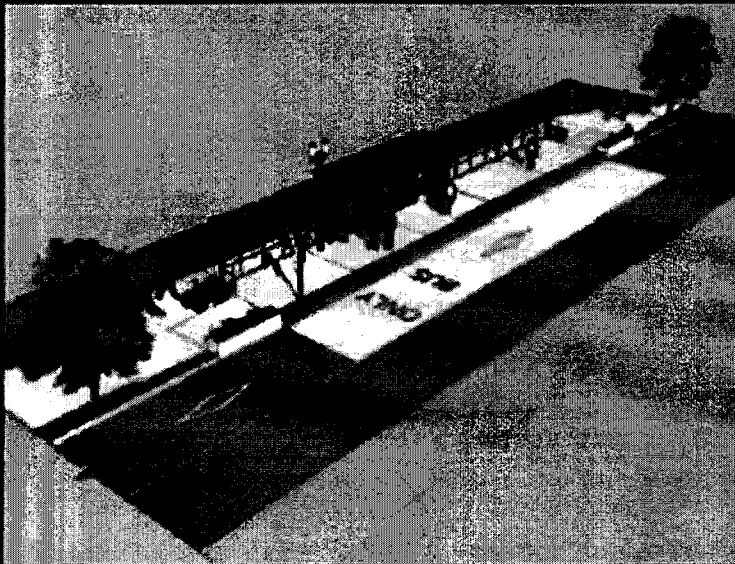
Alexandria Progress

- Final Design complete 2012
- Construction 2012-2013
- Opening late 2013

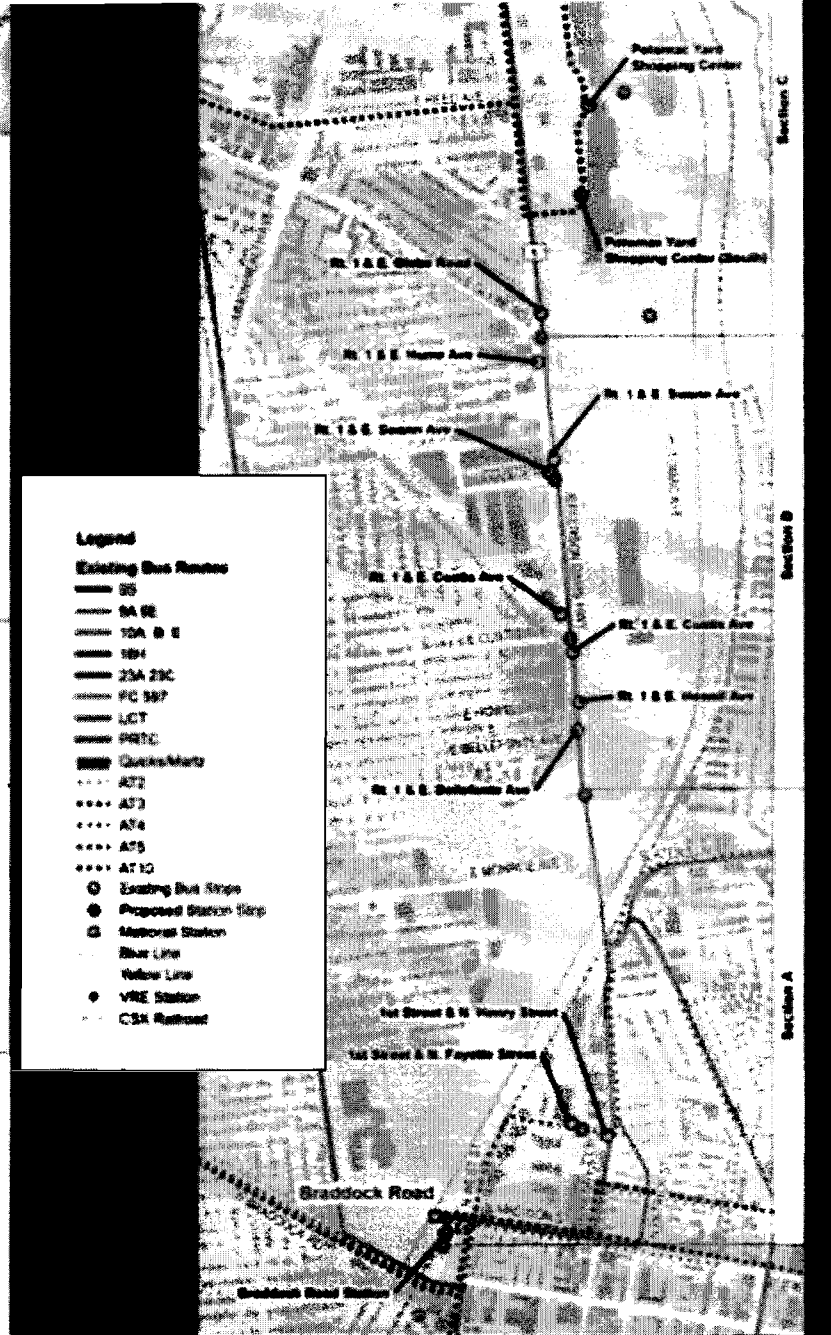
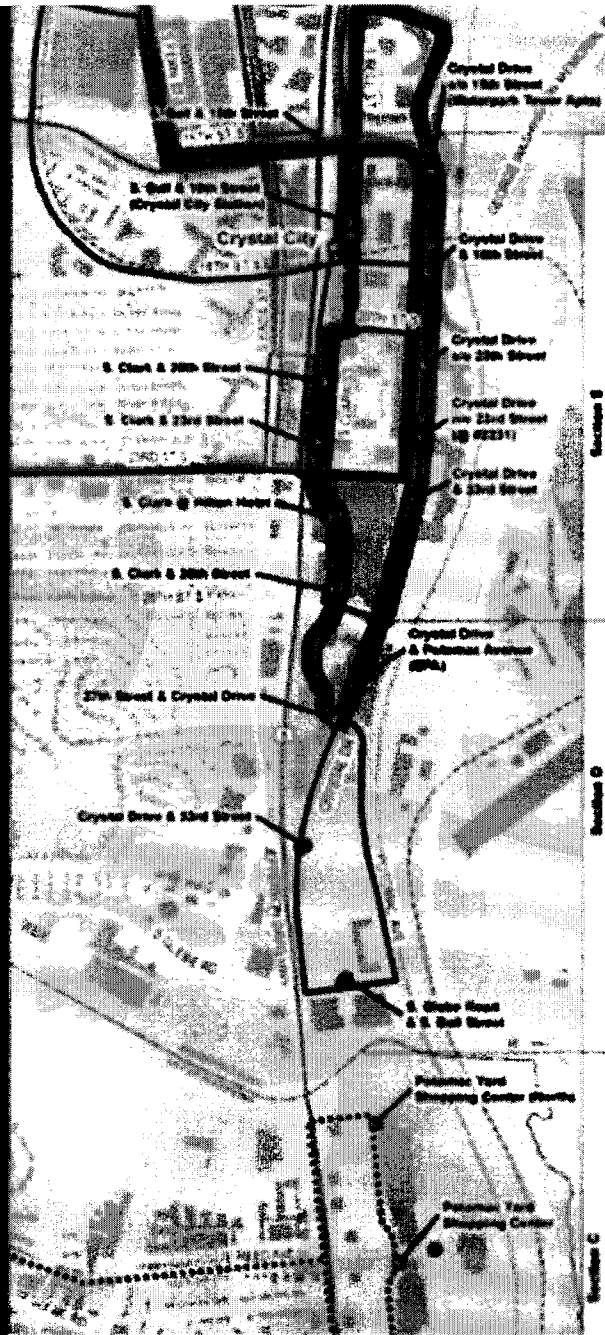


Arlington Progress

- Transitway Final Design complete late 2011
- Construction 2012-2013
- Opening early 2013



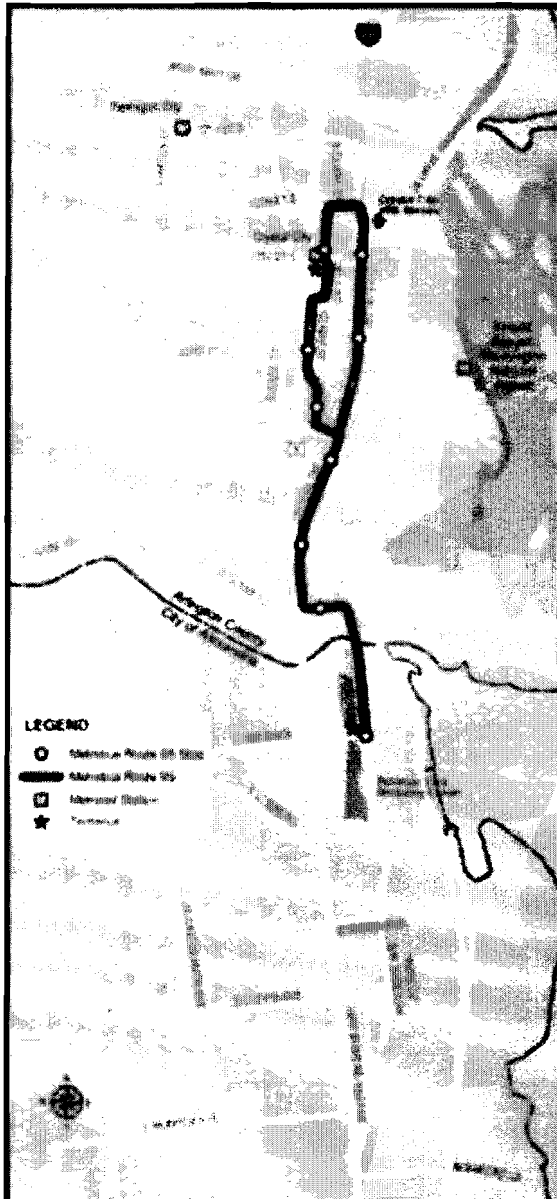
Existing Service



- Legend**
- Existing Bus Routes
 - BS
 - BA BE
 - 10A B E
 - 104
 - 23A 23C
 - FC 597
 - LCT
 - PRTC
 - QuicksMart
 - AT2
 - AT3
 - AT4
 - AT5
 - AT10
 - Existing Bus Stops
 - Proposed Station Stop
 - Metrolink Station
 - Blue Line
 - Yellow Line
 - VRE Station
 - CSA Railroad

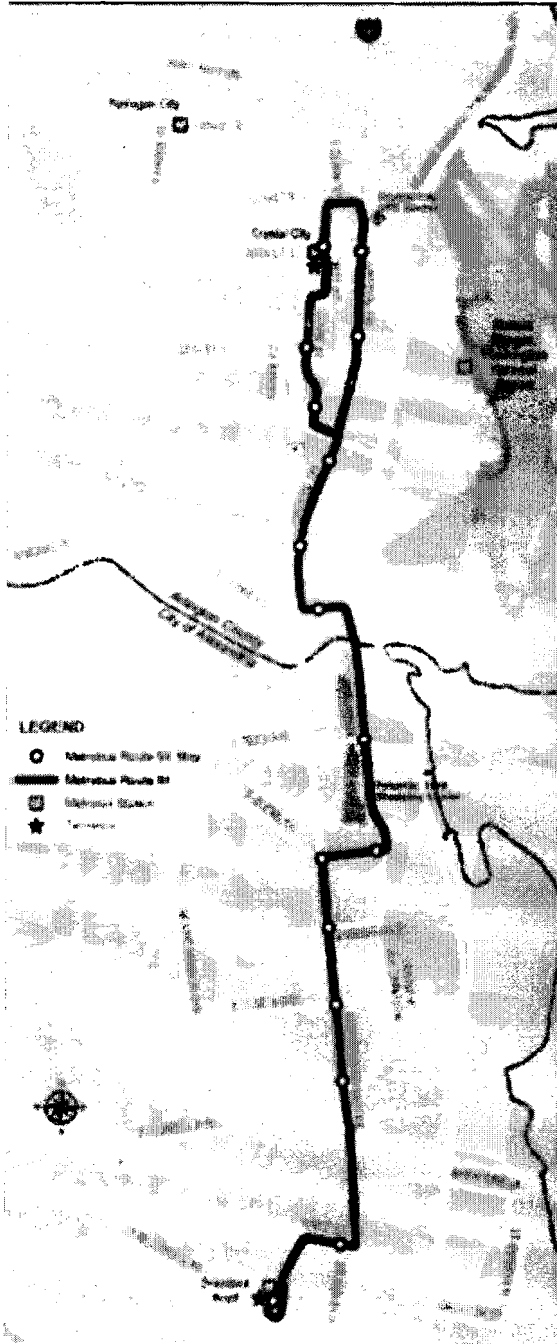
Project Phasing

- Phase in the Initial Operable Segment of the transitway in Arlington County (extension into Potomac Yard in Alexandria).
- Extend transitway south to the Braddock Road Metrorail Station.



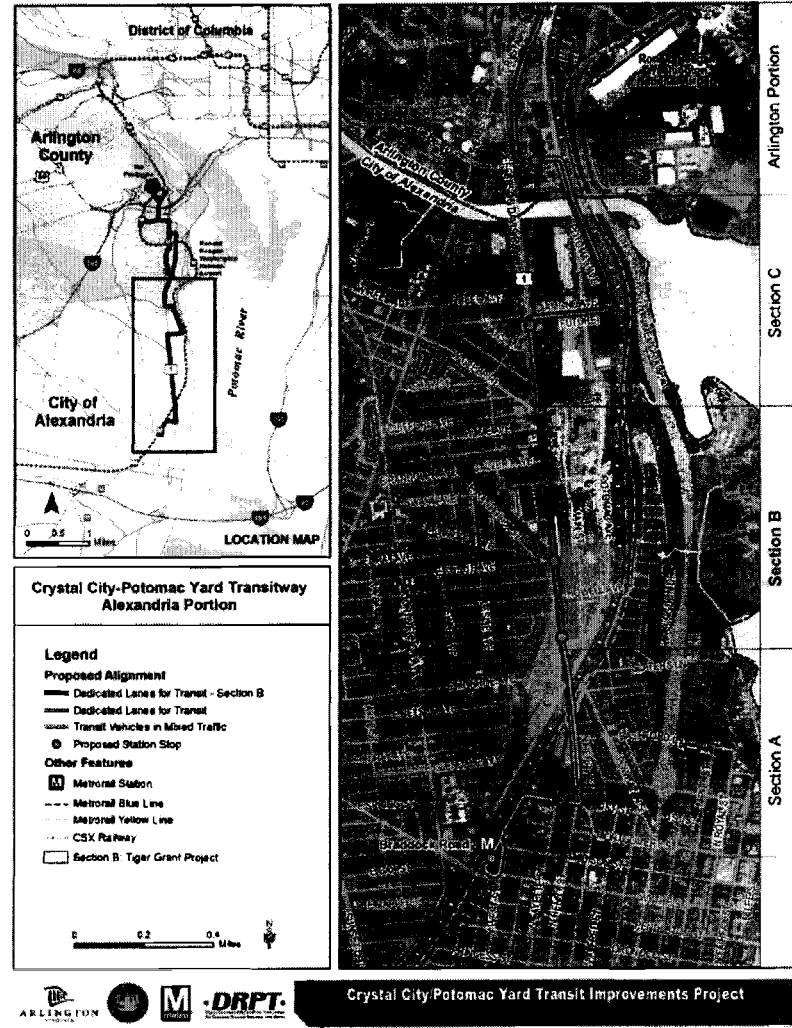
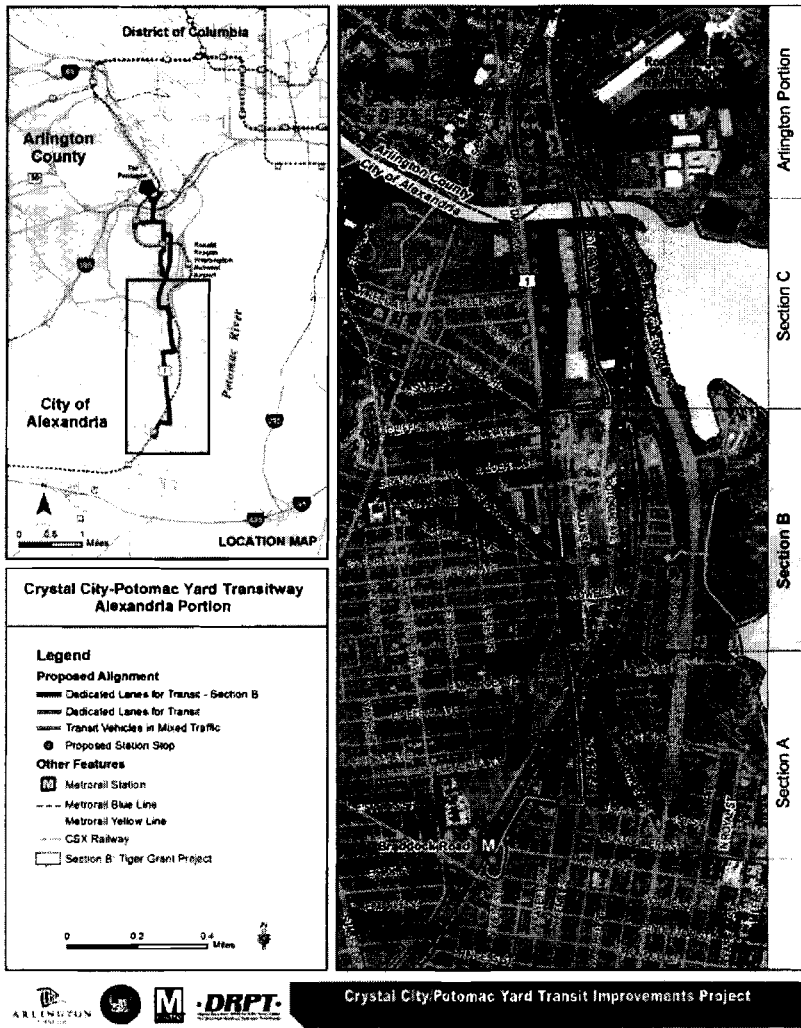
Proposed Transitway Service: Route 9S

- Follows transitway alignment between the Potomac Yard Shopping Center and the Crystal City Metrorail station.
- Extend 9S to Potomac Yard Shopping Center - early 2013
- Frequency (assumed):
 - 6 minute peak
 - 12 minute off-peak



Proposed Transitway Service: Route 9X

- Follows transitway alignment between the Braddock Road Metrorail station and the Crystal City Metrorail station.
- Opens late 2013
- Frequency (assumed):
 - 6 minute peak on Route 1 (combined 9X, 9A, 9E)
 - 12 minute peak (9X)
 - 15 minute off-peak (9X)



Maps of Initial and Future Alexandria Portion

Environmental Clearance

- TIGER Awarded for 0.8 mile dedicated transitway construction on Route 1 in Alexandria – Required environmental clearance.
- Alexandria submitted the preliminary Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE) to FTA for this portion of the transitway (2010).
- FTA concurrence of the Alexandria DCE (March 25, 2011).

Features

- Includes a real-time passenger/transit information system, traffic signal priority, eight station stops in Alexandria.
- The service would operate with 6-minute headways during peak periods and 15-minute headways during off-peak periods.

Funding for Busway Section on Route 1

- TIGER Grant to Construct Busway on Route 1 - \$8.5 Million
- Section 5309 Funds - \$1,247,000
- CMAQ or New Starts for Stations - \$4,164,000

Project Schedule

- Currently developing a set of design-build documents for the Route 1 busway section on Route 1.
- A design-build contractor will be on board by September 30, 2011.
- Separate Bid Package for stations will be placed for the design and build of the stations.
- Alexandria is working with Arlington County to develop an operations plan for the transitway.
- Construction work on the transitway should begin in late 2011 or early 2012.
- Operation of the transitway will occur in late 2013.

Questions

Transitway Configuration

- Five-Mile North/South Corridor
- Approximately 2.3-miles of the transitway is within Alexandria's city limits.
- 1.5 miles of dedicated transit lanes in Alexandria
- 0.8 miles of dedicated lanes will be constructed via TIGER and 0.7 miles will be constructed by a Private Developer
- Operate in 0.71 miles of mixed traffic