

Minutes of the Seven Corners Transportation and Land Use Task Force Meeting September 10, 2013

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM
Mason District Government Center

Attendance:

Task Force: John Thillmann, Mary Ellen Ward, Evelyn Haught, Jim Edmondson, Mark Silverwood, Karl Moritz, Martin Faga, and Vince Burke. Pat Hoar attended via teleconference.

Staff: Elizabeth Hagg (OCR), JoAnne Fiebe (OCR), Bernie Suchicital (DPZ), Kimberly Rybold (DPZ), Kris Morley-Nikfar (FCDOT)

John Thillmann, the Task Force Co-chair, reported that Paul Byrtus resigned from the Task Force because he is moving out of the area. The Task Force reviewed the Minutes of the August 6, 2013 meeting, and approved them unanimously.

John introduced Michael Flood, who is with Parsons Brinckerhoff. Mr. Flood gave a presentation on the Transit Alternatives Analysis Study of the Route 7 Corridor. The study, commissioned by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), concerns the portion of Route 7 from Tysons to the waterfront in the City of Alexandria. Different modes of transit are being evaluated, with the goal of improving the mobility and reliability of transit service along this portion of Route 7. Various jurisdictions, groups and individuals have given feedback regarding the study, and there is a particular desire to see Route 7 transit connected to nearby Metro Stations, specifically the East Falls Church Metro station.

Mr. Flood outlined the four primary modes being considered in the analysis:

- Enhance Bus Service
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Streetcar
- Light Rail Transit (LRT)

He explained that the BRT alternative includes several variations with or without dedicated right-of-way. He also shared the alternative alignments under consideration. The options and alternative alignments will be presented at an upcoming public meeting on September 18, 2013, from 7:00-9:00 pm at the Skyline 7 building in Baileys Crossroads.

Mr. Thillmann asked the Task Force to take a position on both the mode and alignment options presented. Vince Burke and Mark Silverwood both expressed their desire for BRT or LRT service, and preferred the route that incorporated the East Falls Church Metro station because this would benefit the residents and businesses in the Seven Corners study area. Others on the Task Force agreed.

John Thillmann put forth two motions and indicated that he would present these in writing to the NVTC:

1. The Task Force voted to recommend that two alternatives are preferred - LRT and BRT. All voted yes.
2. The Task Force voted to recommend the East Falls Church Metro station loop be added as an alignment. All voted yes.

Land Use Concepts

JoAnne Fiebe presented revised concept plans and sketches representing the proposed general massing in the study area. The updated plan includes adjustments to the concepts developed at the charrette based on the comments received at the August Task Force Meeting. The revised concept plans show a spine road that connects three of the opportunity sites, and includes an elevated roadway over Arlington Boulevard. The concepts also have two town centers: one at the Willston Center site and one at the site of the existing Seven Corners Shopping Center. JoAnne offered two alternatives for the Task Force to consider, Option A and Option B. The Options differed primarily over the placement and design of the open space as well as slight changes in building locations, street grid, and locations of certain land uses. Building intensity/FAR was not significantly different in the two schemes.

The Task Force provided positive feedback on the revised plans and offered several comments to further refine the plans:

1. The Task Force generally preferred Option B, which has an activity field on top of a proposed parking garage located in the Willston opportunity site. This option includes a public plaza at the ground-floor level of the site.
2. Mark Silverwood and Jim Edmonson preferred that the Task Force use floor area ratios (FARs) in-lieu-of dwelling unit counts when evaluating density in the multi-family areas. They explained that this would offer more flexibility in the future because trends in unit sizes change and they need to be able to react to market demand.
3. Some land owners on the Task Force suggested that we offer some additional flexibility with building heights in some of the areas. Thus, where deemed appropriate, a range of heights or stories would be permitted, not to exceed a certain cap, say from 6 to 10 stories. However, such flexibility would be contained within a land-unit such that the overall allowable density for the land-unit would not change. In effect, the allowable density would merely be reallocated to another portion of the land-unit, providing the flexibility needed to encourage development. Some Task Force members noted that taller buildings are more costly to build but, as a construction type, may be more marketable as “for-sale” units. The area along Wilson Boulevard, which is the portion of the study area closest to the East Falls Church Metro station, was cited as being a suitable location for taller buildings.
4. The Task Force also thought it is important to keep the location of the Seven Corners Transit Station fluid depending on what is determined at its Transportation Charrette in November.

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8, 2013 at 7:00 PM at the Mason District Government Center. The Task Force adjourned at 8:44 pm.

By Evelyn Haught
Secretary

Date