



Minutes

PROJECT: Richmond Highway BRT Executive Committee Meeting #4

DATE & TIME: November 28, 2018 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

LOCATION: Mt. Vernon District Office

Attendees:

Jeff McKay, Supervisor -- Lee
Dan Storck, Supervisor – Mt. Vernon
Vanessa Aguayo, FCDOT
Tom Biesiadny, FCDOT
Barbara Byron, OCR
Helen Cuervo, VDOT
Tom Fahrney, FCDOT
Taylor Holland, BOS

Todd Horsley, DRPT
Doug Miller, FCDOT
Eric Teitelman, FCDOT
Jose Bustamante, PMC
Lara Hegler, PMC
Henry Kay, PMC
Jenny Koch, PMC

Supervisor Dan Storck opened the meeting. Tom Biesiadny said the project team would be reporting progress since the last Executive Committee meeting. Vanessa Aguayo reviewed the agenda.

Doug Miller reviewed progress to date on the environmental documentation process. The County received Federal Transit Administration (FTA) concurrence on the Purpose and Need Statement. Project field crews are completing surveys of features; no unforeseen resources have been identified. For the VDOT section, VDOT is preparing an Environmental Assessment. A hearing was held October 29, 2018, and this should be complete well in advance of our CE. Because the BRT project will be using a small area of Ft. Belvoir, the Army is preparing its own document. This will be an appendix to the BRT document.

A coordination meeting with Woodlawn is scheduled for December 17, 2018. The project is researching prior mitigation commitments to Woodlawn. Supervisor Storck noted that Woodlawn is planning some development, so they may be an opportunity to coordinate that with the project impacts. Eric Teitelman noted that FTA is lead agency and will work with Woodlawn on its mitigation requirements. The County will not be involved. Supervisor Jeff McKay asked if there would be right of way impacts on the Old Mill side. Vanessa said there would not. Doug noted that the project will try to focus its impacts on the east side of the corridor because it is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Vanessa reviewed public outreach activities which included public meetings in April 2018, community events, website updates, and newsletters. A public meeting is planned for January 2019 as well as a newsletter. Branding work is progressing and will be shared with the Executive Committee at its next meeting.



Vanessa presented options for the Ft. Belvoir station. In coordination with the Army, we looked at options for Pohick Road which was recommended by EMBARK, as well as Belvoir Road. The preferred option is a station on the east side of the corridor at Belvoir Road. This option fared the best in the quantitative evaluation and facilitates a future extension. Supervisor McKay said traffic volumes from the gate should be considered. He noted that this option is not vulnerable to future Army circulation modifications. He asked if new development at Accotink was considered as a generator of ridership. Eric said that the large number of jobs at the Fort outweighed this. Supervisor McKay said the Accotink development could be connected with Connector service. Tom noted that Tully gate is too far a walk, but from Lieber gate the BRT riders can walk to the hospital. Barbara Byron noted that most people living at Accotink probably work at the Fort. The committee concurred with the staff recommendation to move the station to Belvoir Road assuming subsequent coordination with VDOT does not raise concerns about traffic.

Vanessa reviewed the staff investigation of the feasibility of express BRT service. This included a review of all 24 operating BRT systems in the U.S., two of which offer an express option. For safe operation, a passing lane is required. If the tapers at each end of the lanes are included, the lane would be approximately 1,000 feet long. This would increase the cost and environmental impacts of the project, as well as delay the VDOT project. Further, because most of the ridership is from the northern end of the corridor, most riders would not benefit from the express service. Vanessa reviewed the two precedents: the El Monte Busway in Los Angeles and CTfastrak in Connecticut. Both projects have off-line stations with passing lanes and are located along limited access corridors and are therefore not comparable to Richmond Highway. Barbara said her concern was the impact to the quality of life for the station areas. It has been challenging to minimize the roadway section, and she would be concerned about the additional pavement needed for the passing lane.

Supervisor McKay asked about the difference in transit travel time with the dedicated lanes. The staff will provide this information. Eric noted that a County goal is to encourage people to live near stations, not facilitate traffic from the south. Supervisor Storck asked if the lanes could be shorter because buses would be operating more slowly in the vicinity of stations. Vanessa said a certain amount of taper is needed to accommodate the lateral shift. Supervisor Storck asked if passing lanes were needed at every station. Eric said they were, otherwise the express buses would be trapped behind the local buses.

Tom said that there are currently express buses on I-95 to Lorton and Prince William County from the Pentagon and Franconia-Springfield stations. These buses would not use Richmond Highway. Supervisor Storck asked if private buses would be allowed in the BRT lanes. Eric said they would not. Supervisor McKay noted that private buses are overwhelming the Franconia-Springfield station, and he does not want to see that happen to BRT. Tom said we are trying to offer speed, and if we add too many buses we risk degrading the trip for intra-corridor riders.

Supervisor McKay asked if riders in Los Angeles mistake BRT buses for commuter buses. Henry Kay said no because the vehicles are clearly distinguishable. In the case of BRT, they would use different bays at the terminal stations. Helen Cuervo asked if passing lanes were provided only at select stations would bus bunching will be an issue. Eric said it would not with



the planned six-minute headways, but if express and local buses were combined the express buses would overtake and be trapped behind the local buses. In response to requests from the committee, staff will provide a comparison of BRT and local bus travel times as well as the area needed for the passing lanes.

Vanessa reported the findings of a weekend traffic study. Weekend outside of congested commercial areas is generally free flow. Weekend traffic volumes are within 10% of weekday peaks.

Vanessa reported on the results of a study of options for maintenance facilities. Staff investigated three options: West Ox, WMATA Cinder Bed, and County Cinder Bed. The preferred location is WMATA Cinder Bed because it is already set up to accommodate 60-foot articulated buses. WMATA approval is needed. Tom noted that WMATA needs to resolve a union grievance before discussing this opportunity. Supervisor McKay asked for assurance that accommodating the BRT fleet at WMATA Cinder Bed would not re-open the negotiated lane use entitlements. Tom said the commitments would be honored.

Vanessa reported that the cost has been updated and re-formatted, but is comparable to the estimate from the DRPT study. Escalated to the mid-point of construction, the cost is \$730 million. Supervisor Storck asked about the staff's confidence in the estimate. Tom said it is the best we can do with 5% design. The estimate includes 30% contingency in accord with FTA guidelines. Supervisor McKay asked that all public materials clearly state the estimate is based on limited design and is subject to change. Eric noted the contingency could be increased, but Tom said this would affect its competitiveness for Smart Scale funding. Helen said that for projects with construction duration of more than three years contractors will add a premium to cover their risk for increases in material and labor costs.

Vanessa reviewed the milestone schedule as well as topics for the January 2019 public meetings.

Vanessa said the next Executive Committee would take place in February or March 2019 depending on the availability of environmental findings. Doug noted that because we are preparing a CE, no public hearing is needed but there would an opportunity for public comment.

With no further discussion, Supervisor Storck adjourned the meeting at 12:40 PM.