

Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update)

**Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation
Subcommittee Meeting #2**

Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 5:00 – 7:00 PM
Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority (ARHA)
401 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

**DRAFT MEETING NOTES
(04.19.2016 DRAFT)**

Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Transportation Subcommittee

- Co-Chair Scott Barstow
- Co-Chair Maria Wasowski
- Steve Arabia
- Elizabeth Chimento
- Engin Artemel

This meeting consisted of two parts:

- (1) Transportation Planning
- (2) Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability

TRANSPORTATION

The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services' Planning staff reviewed slides for this part of the presentation which highlighted key Transportation Work Plan items that the department is currently studying. Items discussed under **Phase I of the Transportation Work Plan (February to April 2016) addressed:**

- **Plan Wide Streetscape Improvements:** Draft graphics were shown reflecting possible wider sidewalks, bulb-outs to decrease the crosswalk area for pedestrians, landscaping, trees, and storm-water management improvements.
- **Proposed Royal Street Neighborhood Bikeway:** A possible Neighborhood Bikeway was discussed which could:
 - provide **north-south connectivity** through Old Town to the Mt. Vernon Trail, and
 - create a more **direct and comfortable route** for bicyclists, leading to less pedestrian, vehicle and bicycle conflicts on Union Street (better option for commuter bicyclists).
- **Royal Street is also proposed as a green street** that would contain all the above plan-wide streetscape improvements and it would also contain traffic calming measures to facilitate it as a neighborhood bikeway thus making it a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. The traffic calming measures could possibly include tables at cross walks and bump-outs at the sidewalk corners. **Feedback:** The Advisory Group requested that

staff make sure that the bulb-outs will pose problems for the bicyclists. Staff does not believe they will due to their design but will confirm that.

Estimated Timing for Royal Street Neighborhood Bike Way:

- **Late Spring/Early Summer 2016** - Present initial concept to community through workshops and Old Town North Small Area Plan meetings:
 - **Fall 2016 – Spring 2017** – Refine design concept with further community input.
 - **Late 2017/Early 2018** – Initial Improvements to be implemented concurrently with resurfacing of Royal Street.
 - **Long term Improvements** will be coordinated with development in Old Town North.
- **Rail banking** - It was shared that the City has confirmed that this segment of the corridor is owned by Norfolk Southern; Norfolk Southern believes that this segment may become available for rail banking sometime in the future but for now it is uncertain as to how long NRG may need the spur to undertake work related to decommissioning: demolition, remediation and redevelopment. **Follow-up:** Staff will follow-up with NRG to determine if it can provide any insight into the length of time for decommissioning.
 - **Use of Tracks for Light Rail** – Given the above information pertaining to rail banking, and also given a preliminary study undertaken by staff to examine use of the tracks for light rail, the assessment does not appear to be favorable for light rail at this point in time. Staff looked at the possible start of a line (RTN) and a possible end of a line (most likely Braddock Metro) and found there would be potential conflicts with existing lines at Braddock, thus precluding the likelihood of a connection. As an alternative, staff looked at a high transit capacity bus route but, in both the transit and the high capacity bus route, neither met important Federal Transit Administration guidelines pertaining to ridership, funding for operation and for construction and maintenance, etc. It may be that these considerations change in the future but for now staff is, instead, recommending an expansion of existing transit in the form of expanded bus service (DASH) or an OTN Trolley. By expanding existing transit service or creating an OTN Trolley, the goal of expanding connectivity within OTN (including into NRG) and between OTN/NRG and other communities could be met and at less cost. **Consensus:** Go with the expansion of existing service for the time being (Dash or a Trolley).
 - **Concept of Street Conversions** - Considerations for changing one-way streets (Madison and Montgomery) to two-way were discussed. This follows an idea identified during the Charrette to possibly change Montgomery into a two way street and Madison into an Enhanced Bikeway (changing Madison into an Enhanced Bikeway is also in the Bike/Ped Master Plan). Transit would continue to operate on Madison and Montgomery as it is now with any possible conversions. To convert Montgomery from one way to two way, a left turn onto Montgomery would need to be studied; the feasibility of a left turn southbound onto Washington would need to be studied; and Powhatan access would need to be studied. Turning Madison into an Enhanced Bikeway would mean keeping it one way, but losing a parking lane, and creating a two way protected bike lane from Braddock to the Waterfront. **Feedback:** The Advisory Group asked that no recommendation on street conversions be made until a full analysis and study of these matters has been conducted.
 - **As part of Phase II of the Transportation Work Plan (April to September 2016):**
 - Staff will compile results and recommendations from developer transportation studies.

- Staff will utilize a consultant to conduct a parking analysis.
- **As part of Phase III of the Transportation Work Plan (September to December 2016):**
 - A Transportation Study will be conducted as part of Phase III of the Transportation Work Plan and will include a traffic analysis with recommended mitigation, pedestrian and bicycle needs, and transit and parking recommendations; it will build on information from phases I and II.
- **Fairfax Street as a Possible Arts Corridor** – The Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities and Historic Preservation Subcommittee learned that there are certain challenges with being designated as an Art District under the Commonwealth (for example, only one designation per City; that limitation could create potential competition with other neighborhoods in Alexandria that may also be interested in being designated; no guarantee that existing art institutions in an area will directly benefit). Given those challenges, the notion of making Fairfax Street into an Arts Corridor with a special feel and look could serve as an alternative. The corridor would possibly extend the length of the street into NRG and it could include streetscape improvements, possible crosswalk art (provided it is feasible), lighting, banners and art on public and private property (if the owner agrees to participate).

Transportation Work Plan Discussion

Comment: Location of bike share station should be coordinated with bicycle lanes.

Question: Will there be a sign for cyclists to differentiate between the recreational bicycle route along Mt. Vernon trail and the proposed commuter bicycle route on Royal Street? **Response:** Yes; there will be signs to direct bicyclists at the Mt Vernon trail junction to the north where the trail splits into two routes, one following E. Abingdon Drive, and the other veers left and continues along the Waterfront.

Comment: In addition to north/south bicycle routes, we also need to establish east/west bicycle connections. **Response:** Madison Street is identified as a proposed Enhanced Bikeway in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan Update with the idea of it serving as a connection from Braddock Metro Station to the Waterfront. More study and public input regarding this proposal is needed and will occur in the future with the community.

Comment: As part of the plan wide streetscape improvements, Fairfax Street also needs better lighting. **Response:** Lighting would be included as part of the streetscape improvements.

Question: Can we include to E. Abingdon Street as part of the phasing for streetscape improvements? **Response:** The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services is currently developing a concept for improvements on E. Abingdon Street. It is part of the current Capital Improvement Program.

Question: Will the sidewalk bulb-outs be in the way of bicyclists on Royal Street? **Response:** Bulb-outs can be designed to not be in the way. Bulb-outs do not extend beyond the parking lane

into the travel lane. (Staff will confirm that a design that does not interfere with bicyclists would be utilized).

Comment: Sidewalk material should also be considered. Brick pavers are not good when walking in high-heels.

Comment: Need to zoom in on the drawings to get into the details of the streetscape improvements. Also, in terms of the above comment, most old brick sidewalk did not have a concrete base, which is why they become uneven.

Comment: Since Fairfax Street is a pedestrian street it is very conducive to the idea of an Art Corridor where pedestrians can absorb the art.

Question: For the one-way to two-way street conversion study, will the Level of Service (LOS) study factor in bus transit? There is a concern that when buses are stopping, cars will be stuck behind them. **Response:** The Transportation Study will take into account the existing transit and transit considerations. It might make sense for buses to resume service on Montgomery and Madison Streets as a couplet (east on Madison Street and west on Montgomery Street).

Question: Not sure why we are looking at converting the one-way streets to two-way? **Response:** The idea was introduced during the Charrette in November and the members of the community have requested the study of street conversions. There are no recommendations for either converting to two-way or not at this point. City Staff is looking at topics to be considered for the Transportation Study. The street conversions will need to be studied further before any recommendations are made.

Comment: Agree that there is currently not enough ridership volume in Old Town North to support a rapid transit. A shuttle bus system would be better for Old Town North.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Co-Chair Scott Barstow gave an update on the Environmental Policy Commission's (EPC) letter relating to EPC's priorities for an Old Town North Eco-District. A draft letter is anticipated to be completed for review in late April/early May.

The Office of Infrastructure and Environmental Quality staff gave an update on the Eco-District concept. In that regard, staff informed the Subcommittee that it will be undertaking a study with the assistance of a consultant to explore creation of an OTN Eco-District Plan that is tied to key elements and measures within the Environmental Action Plan and the Eco-City Charter. This effort is anticipated to begin in spring and extend through mid-summer.

Mr. William Skrabak, the Deputy Director of the Office of Infrastructure and Environmental Quality reviewed Alexandria's Long Term Control Update strategy for Combined Sewer System separation and the proposed plan to address overflows at CSO-001 (Pendleton Street). Mr. Skrabak described the phased approach to CSO-001 (Pendleton Street):

- **CSO-001 Phase I (2016-2035)**
 - Targeted Sewer Separation
 - Sewer separation as part of redevelopment and Old Town North SAP
- **Stormwater Controls with Redevelopment**
- **Green Infrastructure**
 - Demonstration projects under consideration for Old Town North SAP
 - Implement where cost effective
- **CSO-001 Phase II (2035)**
 - Reassess based on CSO-001 Phase I and CSO-002/003/004 Projects
 - Implement a plan consistent with future regulatory requirements (likely store and treat strategy)

Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability Discussion

Question: How will enhanced requirements for sustainability capture every property in OTN?

Response: Non-development sites will be on a voluntary basis.

Question: Will the Eco-District concept require criteria that to go beyond code requirements?

Response: Yes; we cannot use the term Eco-District with only base code. However, we can focus on certain criteria that would be required from developers.

Question: Concerned that all these requirements will be focused on the NRG site and not to other properties in OTN. **Response:** The goal of this OTN SAP Update is to require sustainability measures of all potential development sites.

Comment: We have many goals as part of this Plan such as open space, streetscape improvements and sustainability. We should explore trade-offs if we cannot achieve everything in each development site.

Question: To what extent did the Edens site comply with the City's Green Building and Environmental Policies? **Response:** **Staff will follow-up and obtain this information.**

Comment: Larger sites might have more flexibility to apply the Eco-District criteria over smaller sites which could make them unmarketable.

Question: Will there be criteria for reducing stormwater run-off? **Response:** Stormwater requires that no increase in run-off to occur on development sites. Reducing impervious surfaces will be important as new developments occur.

Comment: Widening landscape strips and using stormwater BMPs would be a more visible and a better strategy as part of street improvements and reconstruction.

Question: Are there permeable surfaces for streets? **Response:** Yes; however, they are better when utilized in less travelled lanes such as parking lanes.

Question: Are any of the LEED projects required to use gray water or treat water on-site? **Response:** Some buildings use captured water such as cisterns for irrigation.

Next Steps for the Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability & Transportation Subcommittee:

- (1) Report out to the full OTN SAP Advisory Group on April 28, 2016

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