



PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

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May 13, 2022

The Honorable Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
Suite # 300
2100 Clarendon Blvd.
Arlington, Virginia 22201

RE: ART Operations and Maintenance and Facility- Shirlington Rd.

Dear Ms. Cristol and Members of the County Board,

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) held four meetings between 2020-2021 to review the Department of Environmental Services' concept and schematic designs for Arlington Transit (ART) Operations and Maintenance and Facility (AMOF) on Shirlington Road. The PFRC held a final design meeting recently on May 4, 2022 to discuss the additional use permit requirements and updates to the project since the last meeting on September 29, 2021.

The PFRC's mission is to ensure that the highest quality of land use planning, design, transportation planning, and other important community aspects are incorporated into civic projects as assigned to the Committee by the Arlington County Board. The PFRC uses the Principles of Civic Design (attached) to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington.

Background

The AMOF project will address the need for parking, operations and maintenance of the County's growing ART bus fleet. ART has significantly increased its number of routes and hours of service during the past 10 years and plans to continue growing during the next 20 years, supported by a fleet of more than 100 buses.

In July 2018, the County acquired three parcels of land in Green Valley to construct the facilities needed to consolidate ART service functions and support its current and future needs. The facility will perform regular preventive bus maintenance, repairs and other unscheduled maintenance work. It also will include administration and operations functions and parking for buses and staff. The facility is essential for ART's long-term sustainability.

Project Scope

- operations/dispatch and administration facility
- maintenance facility
- structured parking for personal vehicles
- surface parking for buses
- infrastructure for potential future electric-powered buses
- approximately 250 employees supporting the facility

Project Goals

- meet the needs of the community
- state of the art long-term facility
- operationally efficient
- sustainable and energy efficient
- aesthetics
- stormwater management to minimize flooding
- resiliency in materials – low maintenance

Process

The project's initial concept design was presented to PFRC in December 2020 and the design team presented site context and constraints, sustainability goals, stormwater management, site circulation and parking. In February 2021 we reviewed and discussed several design concepts for exterior finishes and site design elements. In June 2021 we reviewed updated site designs, building layouts, massing, and building exteriors. In September 2021 we reviewed the traffic assessment, pedestrian safety, landscaping, stormwater management, tree canopy, and updated design concepts for solar and battery electric buses (BEB). A final meeting was held on May 4, 2022 to hear updates regarding the use permit and final concept designs for solar-ready buses and BEB.

Alignment with Principles of Civic Design

As noted previously, the PFRC evaluates proposals as they relate to the Principles of Civic Design. The AMOF design proposal and site design comport with several of the Civic Design principles. Several of the principles are not applicable to this project due to the proposed storage of buses, parking and security. The proposal aligns generally with the other principles, incorporating energy efficient design.

Feedback

Throughout the process the PFRC heard some concerns from the community regarding outreach efforts, traffic impacts, aesthetics, use of the onsite parking garage, signage on the parking garage structure facing Shirlington Road and site infrastructure.

Outreach Efforts: During the PFRC process, there were some concerns expressed that the community surrounding the site was not sufficiently informed of the pending plans and received delayed notices via a mailer about community engagement events to discuss project plans and impact. County staff acknowledged that there were some

delays associated with USPS mailings, and some residents did receive these notices later than intended.

Traffic Impact: An additional PFRC meeting to address traffic impacts on the site and the traffic study was held on September 29, 2021. This meeting discussed the manner in which the traffic study of the site was conducted and how this information was shared with the public. There were concerns expressed by the PFRC regarding how the study accounted for reduced vehicle traffic during the pandemic, and also the impact of several anticipated projects in the area, and how they would impact traffic levels overall. The PFRC expressed some concerns with the egress/ingress access to the site.

Aesthetics: Feedback from the PFRC membership included a desire for the structure and security on the site (fencing, etc.) to blend into the surrounding community. Overall, feedback to the design options presented during the PFRC has resulted in a design that has a greater mass, but lower height overall. One of overall goals of the community and staff is to break up the mass of the structure vertically, and avoid large impenetrable blocks on the site. The man-made channel running along the site and existing flooding impacts overall site design options. The project design plans for channel improvements and an improved culvert crossing to help address these concerns.

Garage Usage: Throughout the process community members, specifically the Green Valley Civic Association, have expressed a desire to have at least some public access to the employee parking garage planned for the site as a benefit to the community overall, especially in light of limited parking availability throughout Green Valley. Due to the 24-hour nature of the bus facility operations and safety/security concerns associated with the work performed on this site, this request has not been accommodated, although it was discussed at several of the PFRC meetings.

Site Signage: throughout the PFRC process we heard from community members, particularly the Green Valley Civic Association about concerns with the sign placement and lighting on the site. The initial feedback was that the signage was unnecessarily large for the site and that lighting associated with the signage was not necessary. As of the May 2022 PFRC, staff and the design team have made some modifications to the placement and size of the signage (lowering the sign on the garage structure). These adjustments were viewed as a step in the right direction, but the community still expressed a desire for further changes.

Site Infrastructure: overall the PFRC membership is very pleased with plans to provide for solar panels on the site and preparations for battery operated buses. Questions and concerns were raised about the need to retain the use of fossil fuels for some of the site's operations (such as space heating and hot water), in light of the County's commitment to renewable energy sources.

Overall, the PFRC is pleased with the design of the site and facility as well as the County's commitment to establish sustainable infrastructure for bus charging on the site.

Going Forward

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Committee's feedback on this project. We look forward to the completion of the project.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara G. Steinberger

Sara Steinberger, Chair
Public Facilities Review Committee

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